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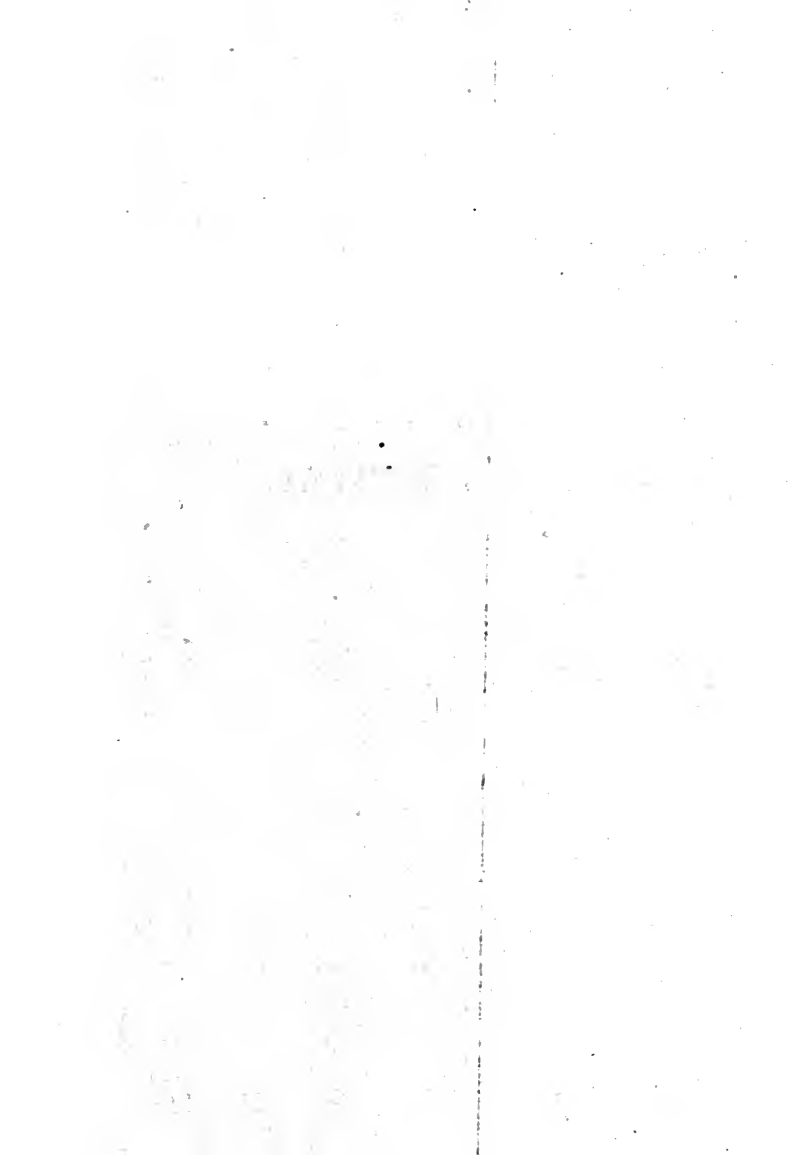


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# **SOCIAL RENEWAL**





# **SOCIAL RENEWAL**

BY

**GEORGE SANDEMAN**



**LONDON**

**WILLIAM HEINEMANN**

**1918**

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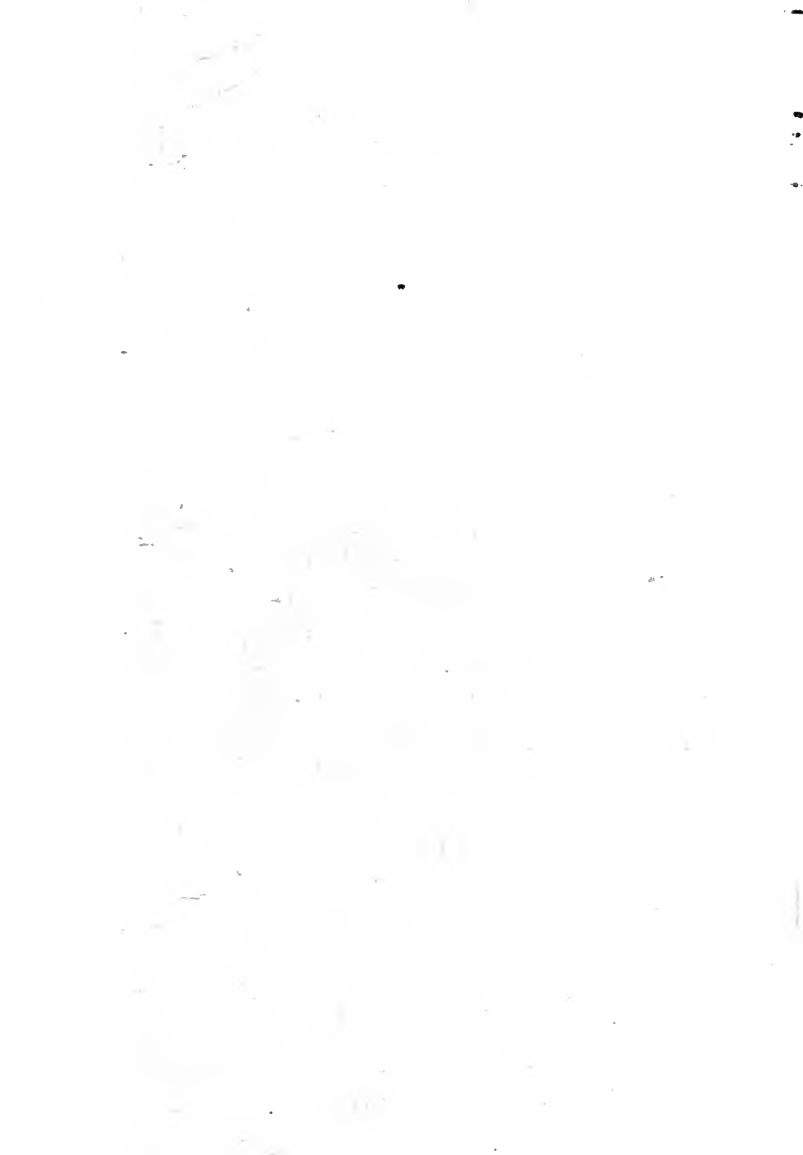
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To E. S. S3

in 1873

*These Papers were written in  
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## I

# INTRODUCTION

RECENT events have suddenly revealed to the people of Britain how formidable is the social condition of their country. Many are discovering that the disorders of society are far deeper and more intractable than they had ever imagined. They had been accustomed to suppose that the social problem consisted of a multiplicity of questions with regard to the state of trade, the housing of the working classes, public health, insurance against sickness and unemployment, education, apprenticeship, licensing of public-houses, poor-law reform, and many other matters of that kind. They had supposed that public ardour for reform, social study, legislation, administration, voluntary effort, and the unlimited expenditure of public money, could at all events keep pace with

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the disorders and distresses of society. But recent revolts of labour, the accumulating demonstration of labour's grim power, and most of all the daunting sense that this power is to be used unscrupulously in the interests of a class and without regard to the interests of society, have taught them that the events which are passing in our time, and the forces with which we have to deal, are of quite another order of magnitude than they had ever imagined.

An enormous flood of discontent is steadily rising throughout the millions of the manual workers of Britain. It is a just discontent, inasmuch that the life which the majority of these workers have to live is in several ways improper for human beings. Thus, their work is largely spent in the production and distribution of undesirable things, and is undertaken merely for the wage. Their employment is insecure and competitive. They have no reasonable expectation of rising to better social or economic conditions, nor of seeing their children do so. They are for the most part isolated from other classes of society and are crowded together in

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dreary streets, and their home life too often reflects the hopelessness of their state. They receive an unduly small proportion of the profits of their labour, yet it is generally impossible that they should receive more. The cost of living increases faster than any increase of their wage; and the narrowness of their circumstances contrasts ever more sharply with the comforts, ostentation and amusements of the classes above them. They have been subjected to a so-called education which has stimulated curiosity and desire and has cheated them with the débris of information and ideas, but has neither fed nor disciplined their affections. Their condition is lamentable and their discontent is just.

Moreover, this discontent is irresistible; no one imagines that it can be repressed, nor would public opinion now tolerate its repression. It will take its course, and no one can foretell what that course will be. We only know that it is frankly revolutionary and has taken the form of a deliberate class warfare. It is careless of the sufferings and impoverishments which it inflicts.

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It is misguided by a shallow, materialistic and unhistoric estimate of human needs and their satisfactions. It aims only at larger wages and shorter hours of labour, believing that these would relieve the felt injustice and oppression. It supposes that our industries are so profitable that they will not be injured, and employment be consequently diminished, by the increasing irritations and exactions of labour; and it may not unlikely, on that account, result in great disasters to the workers themselves. Its spirit is anti-social, saturated with envy, repudiating agreements and violating personal liberty. None the less, this vast flood of discontent is due to a state of injustice and oppression.

On the other hand, during these last thirty years, while the discontent of the deeps below has been gathering force and volume, there has been growing also in the heights above, and in quite another form, a separate discontent with the conditions of the labouring class. Between these two movements, though they are set up by the same facts, there is as little relation or sympathy as there could possibly be. Indeed, the move-

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ment of the workers below, and the movement of the social student, philanthropist and politician above, are opposed to one another. The former desire to enter into possession; they want abundance of life; they want to grow up and to have their place in the sun and to be free. The reformers and philanthropists intend exactly the contrary; their idea is to elaborate and to aggravate and to perpetuate the tutelage of the workers. No two aims could be more radically antagonistic. But whether we recognise or do not recognise the fallacy of what are now called social reforms, none of us can fail to honour the magnitude and vitality of the present interest in popular welfare. For although this abstract concern for the condition of the workers, this scientific and organised and legislative philanthropy, is now in a state of prodigious bewilderment, seeing that the forces with which it affects to deal are swift, unfathomable, inexorable, it is none the less by far the predominant intellectual and moral interest of the present generation.

The subject before us is therefore one of

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very general interest. Let us consider the discontent of the manual workers, and the discontent of the philanthropists, social students and reformers, in relation to the actual disorders and distresses of society, and especially in relation to real social principles.



## II

### THE NEED OF PRINCIPLES

THE social problem is a matter in which we all want to get down to principles. Everyone is agreed at least in this respect. The whole declared intention of social students and reformers of our day is to get down to principles and to get down to the root of the evil. They rightly say that we must not be content with giving doles, nor with alleviating the symptoms of social disorder, but that we must apply the remedy at the very root of the trouble. Well, let us here set out to do this. If we can find these bedrock principles and be sure of them, will it not be worth while to give up everything else, in order that we may follow them?

How unsatisfactory, after all, is anything short of that! Or what could we value more highly than a good conscience in

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respect of our country? Love of her beauty and compassion for her sorrows have removed all trivial and private interests from many English hearts. There are many who will find no rest until they can look in peace upon the faces of the destitute and walk at ease beside the tramps on the road. There are many who have given up everything else for the service of the people.

Yet, having done so much, how vain do they find their labours! In what ineffectiveness, what lack of finality and repose, what hopelessness, and, above all, what bewilderment are they now still involved! For, as we are all agreed, there is little gain in doing much unless we can do the truth, or that which is in accordance with reality. And the truth, under the circumstances of our present world, is in this matter not easy to find. The ways in which we may go wrong are many and specious, and it is not at all strange that the social students and reformers of our time have often become lost in these wrong ways. Let us enumerate only a few of them.

(1) *It is a mistake to recognise only*

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*immediate causes and immediate effects*, and so to throw ourselves into temporary alleviations and expedients, mistaking these for a return to social reality. Alleviations, when understood to be such, are excellent; we cannot have too much of them. But alleviations which are mistaken for a fundamental rightness and realness of social life partake of neither character. Expedients which are mistaken for social principles are bad expedients and are not principles at all.

Let us take, for example, the case of unemployment. Every one agrees that this is the result of the insecurity and irregularity of industries. That is to say, every one recognises the *immediate* cause of unemployment. All subsequent error arises from our fatal habit of not going behind immediate causes. We ought to discover the nature of this insecurity and irregularity, and defy and resist them; for by so doing we should come a step nearer to real social principles, and to a practical rightness and realness of social life. But what do the reformers do? They accept the insecurity of industry *as if it were ultimate* and without any cause

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behind it, and proceed to alleviate its effects. By making their expedient compulsory, they give it the rank of a principle. Their method is, in the first place, to do all they can to increase the "fluidity of labour." But this fluidity of labour means principally the uprooting of persons and families; it means the systematic promotion of homelessness, and therefore of unemployment. In the second place, they further promote the insecurity of industry by elaborating a compulsory insurance against unemployment, whose benefits cannot but remain quite inadequate to the necessities of the unemployed, and whose burdens cannot but increase the amount of unemployment. Regarded as immediate relief for a distressing condition, these measures may be well enough; but if we consider them in the light of real reforms, their only possible result is to aggravate unemployment with its consequent miseries and dislocations. The reformers, with the best intentions, alleviate distress at the cost of confirming the conditions of distress. Yet that is exactly the accusation which they bring

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against the man who gives a shilling to every beggar he meets. They recognise only the *immediate* cause (the existence of industrial insecurity), and aim only at *immediate* ends (the mitigation of the hardships of unemployment and the provision of employment at any cost to the workman). They do not hesitate to *assist* that ever-increasing tendency, by which men are tossed about from one city to another or from one job to another; for they have generally no conception of what social life is, nor of what human life needs.

(2) *It is a mistake to float with the current of opinion of our time or province*; for this current of opinion is important only as one phase, among others, of those very social changes which we ought to try to understand. Our reason may, and should, take hold upon larger and profounder directions than are recognised by temporary theories and controversies; just as the navigator, by means of the compass or by observation of the stars, takes hold upon vast unchanging directions. To concern ourselves with the opinion of our time, otherwise than as one phenomenon among others, is demonstrably

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to stultify reason. Each generation knows well that the opinion, in this matter, of the preceding generation was profoundly misleading, yet vainly consoles itself with the notion of progress of thought, where there is no progress of thought.

For example, it was not very long ago believed, almost universally, by the most acute and well-informed and well-meaning people, that the amount of material production was the measure of national prosperity, and that unrestricted competition in every direction was the condition of that prosperity. The abstract reasoning in favour of that view appeared sound enough, and was indeed sound so far as it went; but every one knows to-day that this entire theory of *laissez-faire* was a heartless fallacy. Almost no one knew it then. The theory was itself a part, and the most disastrous part, of those very social disorders and distresses which it was expected to antagonise. Now the modern world (that is to say, the general consent of well-meaning, instructed and respectable people) considers that theoretic errors of that kind, and

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consequently mistaken policies, have been inevitable in the past ; but it considers also that its own views and methods of to-day are free from any such nefarious illusions. Both of these assumptions are however unfounded. Its present methods are as false and as baneful as any in the past ; but neither they nor any which have preceded them have been at all inevitable. In every case, now as in former days, these errors are infallibly discovered and rejected as soon as the observer comes in sight of social reality.

(3) *It is a mistake to put the wrong thing first.* If the welfare of society, of families, of individuals, be the aim upon which we are set, then let us go straight for that end, and not make it secondary to anything else. If we desire to serve humanity, let us do so immediately, and serve men according to their true needs ; let us not first satisfy the demands of inhuman systems and conventions, and then in the second place serve our neighbour. If the welfare that we desire be *social* welfare, let us not seek anything else. Society, whatever more it may be, is certainly a mysterious real living

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unity in which individuals stick together. If, therefore, society involves *sticking together*, let us not begin by making terms with the forces which drive apart, or diminish internal cohesion. It is absurd to proceed directly contrary to the end which we all have in view, with the idea that we are thereby serving it. It is absurd to subordinate the crowning end of our endeavour, or rather of our life, to all kinds of partial ends which have got quite out of hand. Partial ends have set themselves up on their own account and have taken charge; and we have to defy them. We dare not put these wrong things first, and then serve the chief end afterwards.

We need not look far for examples of putting the wrong thing first. They throng the whole field of vision, and we shall have to deal with many. Thus, the scientific intellect or abstract understanding, which is now made to dominate charity, is the wrong thing for that position; because we are here to serve actual men and women as they are and as they choose to be; we are not here to compel them to serve our own ideas of what



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they ought to be. Again, comfort, respectability, and success, which are now universally put first, are quite the wrong things for that position. But let us here take as an example the place which is given to the industrial system. That system, which is largely the creation of avarice and hardness of heart, is not yet four generations old and is plainly going to its ruin; yet we defer to it as though it went back to Abraham and would go forward to the consummation of the world. Industry has got out of hand and fails even to serve its partial end, yet we continue to put it first. Instead of subordinating industry to the needs of mankind and to the ends of social cohesion, we continue to break down social bonds and to violate the rights of human beings in order to serve the needs and ends of industry. We have subordinated human life and all its amazing values, to the contingencies of blind, inhuman forces.

That is why we see the people incessantly engulfed and crushed and used up, and their broken and dying remains cast forth, as if by some vast invisible engine. The hope of every one, for himself and for his children,

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is that he and they, by hard work or by luck, by force or by cunning, may seize and cling to some precarious position of advantage. Compassionate people, themselves entangled in this titanic mill, do all they can to mitigate its horrors. They fence its notoriously fatal corners; they train the children who are about to be cast in, to seize some corner where they may escape for a time; and in a hundred ways they help that pitiful multitude whose feet have slipped and who have fallen into the pits below. But untaught by all they see, they constantly believe that as this stupendous mechanism becomes swifter, vaster, more complex, it will minister more perfectly to the purposes of human life. And so they call its progress, human progress. They put the wrong thing first.

If this be the power which actually dominates our people, how shall there be any social order? How shall any human end be attained amid its murderous convulsions? Its presence and character are everywhere shown. The huge uproar of the factory, the gloom of the vast manufacturing town, the dreariness and fruitlessness of

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expanding London, compel us to see an enormous iron system which devours man and does not serve him. The hurry, the restlessness, the overwork, the shoddy production, the mindless toil, the heartless speculation, the unjust wage, the insecurity from week to week, the anxiety, the thirst for excitement, the jaded and empty mind, the underfed and stunted body, the dreary streets, the heavenless life, all reveal the slave-driving devilry behind the scenes as clearly as an army in rout reveals the pursuer. It is no fallacy to reason from deserted fields to a spirit antagonistic to creation: nor to take the grim ironworks, with their incalculable degradation and destruction of human material, as the characteristic signature of the monstrous work behind them. Things are after all what they seem; forces and dominions have truly the character of their effects; and the industrial machine is as hateful as its works are cruel.

Yet this abomination is still put first. Every word which is uttered with regard to the social problem takes for granted the continued existence, and the justice, of an

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order to which human life and worth are to be for ever subordinated. Every measure which is taken in the name of social reform presupposes a mechanical, inorganic system, which coheres by inferior bonds, such as relations of supply and demand, cash and credit, speculation, avarice, ambition, and desire for comfort and for pleasure ; and not by the worthier bonds of justice, obedience, fidelity and charity. The measures of reform adapt themselves to that injurious system, and are in order to serve it and strengthen it ; and this general acquiescence in it is the most hopeless element in all the evil. Charity, and all social virtues, are made secondary to this iron machine, whereas they ought to be secondary to nothing whatever. That is one example of the way in which we put the wrong things first.

(4) *It is a mistake to take a partial view of the social question.* For example, to consider that it is a question of one class of the population, and not of every class. It concerns the condition of the whole people existing concretely as one people, together

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with all our customs, relations, standards of value, ideas, and the entire apparatus of our life. If the destitute and incapable were altogether penned up out of view, the life of many thousands grinding hopelessly from childhood to old age at worthless labours which they know to be worthless would still provide the social question. Nor is it a problem only of the poor, but is concerned equally with the joylessness, apathy and emptiness of heart and mind, of many who have never known hunger ; and again with the idleness, softness and frivolity which debase the standard of a nation's desires.

Again, it is erroneous to imagine that the disorders and distresses from which we suffer are of one partial kind, or can be comprehended from any abstract point of view. The social problem is not a legislative, nor an agrarian, nor a commercial, nor an educational problem, nor is it a question of public health, nor is it a biological or racial problem of heredity and breeding. No partial aspect, whether it be historical, geographical, economic, or any other, is sufficient for the interpretation of the

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actual condition. Nor would an exhaustive analysis of the social question from all these points of view at once, even if such a feat were possible, bring us any nearer to true understanding or to effective conduct. The concrete reality, this immense, unfathomable, swift, silent stream of life which is England, cannot be gauged by partial measures. To-day is not as yesterday, nor will to-morrow be as to-day. While we make investigations the situation has changed, and our remedy is out of date before it is applied. The understanding represents the reality analytically, as if the reality were a complex and static sum of abstractions; but the reality is simple, concrete, and most formidably dynamic.

Once more, it is futile to imagine that the troubles of our country are due to this or that particular cause. It is false to ascribe them principally to slackness of trade, or to foreign competition, or to monopoly of land, or to want of education, or to marriages of the weak in body or mind, or to lack of good houses, or to excessive drinking, or to any other partial cause whatsoever. And in the

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same way it is a delusion to suppose that they can be removed, or even considerably alleviated, by any partial measure whatsoever, whether of legislation or of voluntary effort and organisation. Such movements as those in favour of tariff reform, women's suffrage, the nationalisation of land, the reform of the poor law, the provision of small holdings, the promotion of profit-sharing, the increase of education, the revival of apprenticeship, the teaching of domestic economy and hygiene, and the innumerable other projects which are now so clamorous, gain by far the greater proportion of the support which they receive by promising to do that which no one of them, nor all of them together, can even begin to accomplish.

If it be indeed a mistake to take a partial view of the social question, then the present movement of intellectual, organised and scientific interest in our social distresses, and of efforts for their amelioration, is hopelessly involved in error, from top to bottom and from beginning to end. Moreover, it cannot in any conceivable way escape from

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that error, which is inherent in its very existence. The entire movement, with its countless ephemeral societies, leagues, councils, committees, schools, study-circles, conferences, congresses, investigations, blue-books, controversies and debates, all involving the maximum of talk and agitation and the very minimum of life, is miserably external, and in all its ways inadequate to that prodigious reality with which it sets out to deal. If this were all, the social movement might be regarded as little more than a waste of time. But it is far worse than that. Pretending to represent that charity of which it is the subtle and venomous enemy, it betrays generous hearts into acting contrary to their most cherished intentions. It has all the character of a stratagem, deluding those who are engaged in it; and the stratagem is ingenious and successful almost beyond belief.

(5) *It is a mistake to take a low or narrow view of human beings and their needs.* They need nobler and richer satisfactions than they are always aware of, and need them in the sense that they are baffled and miserable



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without them. Any real attempt to understand the social question must take into account the range of human nature. We must think of men and women as they actually are, and not as if they were abstractions. They need a long way more than comfort and respectability; more than economic security; more than amusement. Comfort, hygiene, leisure and intellectuality, such as constitute the senile ideal of the socialist, might conceivably be achieved for all, and yet the state of the people be more miserable than it has ever been. They need the things of youth far more than they need these senile things. They need labour, fatigue, the open air, the country, sport, adventure, jollity. They need hardness and the preparation for war. They need work in which they can take a pride, institutions in which they can lose themselves altogether, services in which it is worth while to suffer and to die. They need strong cohesion with many, home and hospitality, to love and to be loved. They need the colour and the drama of life. They need responsibility, obedience and command, swift choices, the play of manhood.

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'They need hope and liberty.' In a word, they need life. When pity is expressed for men and women it is always because they have not life, and for no other reason. If, then, what we desire for them is life, and more life, we must first understand what is the scope of human nature. Shall we not err greatly if our social reforms have principally the effect of diminishing the life of the people? If, for instance, comfort should be assured at the cost of liberty?

Long ago, Tocqueville foresaw how that bad bargain might be made. Judge whether his words are or are not coming true in this present time.

"Let me imagine," he says, "under what new form despotism may again reappear. I see an innumerable multitude of men, all similar and all equal, incessantly revolving on themselves to procure trivial and vulgar pleasures. Each of them, separate by himself, is a stranger to the destiny of all others; his children and his intimate friends constitute for him the human race. He lives among his

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fellows, but does not see them ; he touches them but does not feel them. He exists only in himself and for himself ; and though he may still have a family, he has no fatherland.

“ Above all this multitude there rises an immense tutelary power which has made itself responsible for their enjoyments and watches over their fortune. It is absolute, detailed, regular, provident and mild. It would resemble the paternal authority, if, like a father, its purpose were to form men for the age of manhood ; but it seeks on the contrary to fix them irrevocably in childhood ; it desires that its subjects shall enjoy themselves, provided that they think of nothing but enjoyment. It labours willingly for their welfare, but must itself be the sole benefactor and sole judge of what they need. It provides for their security, foresees and assures all their wants, facilitates their pleasures, conducts their principal affairs, directs their industry, regulates their bequests, and divides their inheritance. It relieves them almost altogether of the trouble of thinking and even of living.

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“ Thus, day by day, *it makes free will more useless and its exercise more rare ; it confines the action of the will within a narrower space, and gradually robs the individual even of the use of himself.* Equality has prepared men for all these things ; it has made them willing to be subject to them and even to regard them as benefits.

“ After having taken every individual within its powerful grasp and pressed him in its mould, the sovereign power extends its arms over the whole of society, and covers its surface with a network of little complicated rules, meticulous and uniform, through which not the most original minds nor the most vigorous spirits can penetrate so as to emerge from the multitude. It does not break the wills of men, but *softens, bends, and directs them ;* it rarely forces men to action, but *incessantly sees to it that they shall not act.* It does not tyrannise over them ; but it *hinders, stifles, enervates, extinguishes, and dulls them ;* and at last reduces the people to a herd of timid industrial animals, under the shepherding of government.

“ I have always believed that a servitude

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of this kind, orderly, mild and peaceful, might combine better than is generally imagined with some of the external forms of liberty ; and that it might even establish itself under the shadow of popular government."

This process has gone far and will go much farther. It consists in the progressive disintegration of society. It more and more separates the individual from bonds of cohesion with his neighbour, whether his parent, child, brother, master, servant, or any other ; and more and more subjects all the conditions of his life, his activities and even his thoughts, to the regulations of an absolute government.

Human nature is social all through ; all our activities are social. If, therefore, social ideals or reforms are inspired by a low or narrow view of human nature, and are directed to satisfy only the material needs of man, they are bound to do violence to his spiritual needs and so to further the disintegration of society.

Every one of the mistakes which we have sketched above is characteristic of modern reform. If it is a mistake to recognise only

immediate causes and immediate effects, or to float with the currents of momentary opinion, or to put the wrong thing first, or to take partial and abstract views of the social question, or to entertain a narrow view of human nature, then the social interest which is at present so general is saturated with error. Moreover, each of these mistakes, like others which might be added to their number, results in a mischievous treatment of symptoms instead of a sound understanding of the disorder itself. Every one of them arises from a failure to get down to real social principles. But the opinion of our time, having a false conception of society, cannot take in the idea of real principles, and is therefore restricted to seeking for the profoundest discoverable expediency.

On the other hand, when we come down to principles we come down to a great simplicity, clear certainty, and incomparable power. Expedients are manifold, abstract, temporary, uncertain; principles, on the contrary, are unitary, concrete, infallible, eternal. In the study of real social principles we arrive at a plane where all social prob-

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lems, in all their modes, find their final and practical solution. This is no extravagant claim. The final practical solution of the social problem is conspicuous and unmistakable, and lies close at hand.

All who will may themselves solve the social problem, and it admits of no other solution. Every other pretended solution is a mere delusion. The social disorders and distresses arise from the lack of rightness and realness of life ; and new rightness and realness of life are infinitely powerful for the renewal of society. Surely ideals of every kind, from the most grandiose schemes of social reform down to the absurdest fancies of the simple life, have been tried sufficiently, and have failed, and will continue to fail. Let us rather follow the way which cannot fail.

### III

## REAL SOCIETY

**THERE** are two ways of regarding human society, which are profoundly opposed to one another.

One way, which we may call the collective theory, regards society as a collection of individuals. This is the theory which is generally understood and taken for granted at the present day. Almost anyone will say that society is the sum of the population, together with the sum of their actual relations. From this point of view the word "society" is a convenient name, and nothing more, for a multitude of separate individuals who are interrelated in all manner of complex ways, as by race, customs, laws, language, industry, and so on. We may also call this the individualist theory of society, for it regards the separate individuals,



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in their multitudinous relations, as being the concrete reality, and society as being only a collective term for these individuals.

But this collective or individualist theory of human society is erroneous, just as it would be erroneous to define a tower as a multitude of stones. A tower is more than a collection of stones, for it must be built on certain architectural principles and in accordance with certain natural laws, or it will not stand. It must have a certain design and harmony of proportions, or even if it stands it will not serve the purpose of a tower. The stones must have a certain hardness and resistance to weather, a certain severity and subordination of form, and must be strongly bound together, or there can be no lasting tower. The collective or individualist view of a tower, which should see in it only a collection of stones, with the consistency and shape which they may happen to have, and the mutual relations in which they may happen to find themselves, would be a theory worthy only of ruins, and if it had practical force, as theories of society have practical force, could lead only to ruination. That is

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to say, a collective or individualist theory, however elaborate and ingenious it may be, is of its very nature quite unsuited to any real structure which has a plan and purpose and real principles of its own. A tower is undoubtedly a heap of stones, but only a lunatic would think of that as its real nature. To the same man, and especially to the architect, the design and purpose and principles of the tower, and its stability and magnificence, are *real*, and are essential to any intelligent study of the structure. They regard the tower as a real thing on its own account, and not at all as a collective name for a heap of stones.

In like manner, it is erroneous to regard the body of an animal or plant as a mere aggregate of cells, together with the sum of their actual relations and functions. That may be a sufficient account of the body after life has left it and it is falling into corruption; but the living organism is in itself a real creature, within which the constituent cells live only by subordination. It is erroneous to forget that the organism has a life of its

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own, far surpassing the innumerable lives of its microscopic cells.

Just as a tower differs from a heap of stones and an organism differs from a multitude of cells, so human society differs from a collection of individuals. The collective or individualist theory of society is inadequate to its real nature, and is therefore false. Society is not the sum total of the population together with the sum total of their mutual relations. It is something vastly different from this. We therefore have recourse to that other view of society, which regards it as being a real thing on its own account, with a design of its own, a life of its own, and principles of its own. This may be called the *realist* theory of society, because it regards human society as in itself a real thing, and not merely as the sum of its constituent individuals. And it is only because society is a real, organic, living thing, with a design of its own and principles of its own, that we are able to speak of real social principles.

All our habits of mind with regard to social matters, and indeed with regard to

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every human interest, will depend upon whether we are accustomed to entertain the one or the other of these opposite theories of society. From the collective point of view—that is to say, the point of view of the modern social student of every school—the observer sees so many millions of separate individuals, possessing such and such traditions, customs, resources, communications, and so on; and these numerically separate units, collectively, constitute society. From the realist point of view, on the contrary, he perceives a concrete, living, historic home, of inexhaustible grandeur and wealth, into which he was lately born and from which he must shortly die; and this majestic and lovable structure is for him society and is humanity. He perceives that this structure, which is the home of all his life, includes within its fabric indefinitely various elements, besides and far above its present population. The hills and plains, rivers, shores and harbours, the fields and roads and cities, churches and graves, place-names and local memories, houses and gardens, which were there before

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any of his fellows were born and will be there long after the last of them is dead, are woven all through it, and are true and essential elements of human society. The history, customs, laws and traditions of his country, its language, its habits of mind, its literature, are from generation to generation ; each generation, and much more each individual, is the guest of all this, how partially and for how brief a space ; and these things, far more than their ephemeral inmates, constitute society. The social organisation of our people, their institutions, the framework of mutual responsibilities, fidelities and affections, the forms of respect, the standards of value, the expectations of valour and of virtue—all these elements, and how many more which analysis can never disentangle, are the tissues of our living home. The flood of perfections which descend among men, the supernatural channels of charity and sanity which daily regenerate society, are its very life. To anyone who has at all considered what he owes to society (for he owes everything) it is ridiculous to speak of society as identical with any number of

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individuals or as created by any number of generations. To this higher life than his he belongs more closely than to mother and father or to wife and children, and to them only because to it. In real society he is one with all the others, past, present and to come, with a concrete, vital, inward unity.

So, under the collective or individualist theory of society, each of us is separate, complete in himself, independent, absolute; he finds himself in external relations with his contemporaries; and thus, by society, his freedom is limited. But under the realist view of society, the individual is utterly dependent and insufficient; in himself he is nothing and owes all. Together with all his fellows he is immersed in a common life which is from far above them all, opulent, wholesome, infinitely recuperative—a living structure which is to individuals as the tower to its stones and as the body to its constituent cells. And so, through society, he finds life and liberty.

It is impossible to regard society thus concretely as it actually exists without realising that it is an affair of Nature, con-

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natural with the whole range of human existence, and not an affair of convenience or of arrangement. It is a living thing, and not a mechanical thing; a work of creation, and not a work of artifice. It is humanity itself; no one can really think of it as a human work, any more than man is of his own making; nor imagine that its principles are intellectual devices, any more than the law of gravitation is. If natural things, such as the earth and its seasons, the living creatures, the powers and affections of mankind, are works of creation; then human society, the harmony in which all these things actually come to us, and apart from which we have no life at all, is itself of no other order. There are works of Nature beneath our feet, which are in some degree at our disposal; but here, in human society, is Nature extending far away above our heads.

Consider, then, how social forms have the character of natural works and not of artifice. The valour and patience of a countless multitude have gone to the making of England, but what human mind has been in the least

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degree her architect? Is the beauty of woodland of one origin, and the beauty of an English village of another origin? Or what ruler or what dramatist conceived those admirable characters—king, peasant, soldier, judge, physician? All things of this order plainly come from above; their native dignity, though now so nearly forgotten, has at one time been recognised by all peoples; and society has most flourished when its high sanction has been most understood. Moreover, like all natural things, but far more than any other, human society is the mirror of the supreme perfections; and this is the characteristic mark of works of creation.

If we consider these two theories of human society, the collective theory and the realist theory, there cannot be any question as to which of them is true. The collective theory is a mere abstraction and represents nothing which actually exists. It is as if we were to imagine that a tree consists of its this year's leaves, disregarding roots, stem, branches, and twigs, and were still to call this airy cloud of leaves a tree. Neither can there be any question as to which of the two theories



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is proper to those who concern themselves with social affairs—the theory which regards the object of their study as real, or that which regards it as a mere name. The architect studies the tower *as* a tower and not as a heap of stones; and in the same way we have to study society concretely *as* society, and not as a multitude of abstract individuals living under abstract social conditions.

This is no merely academic distinction. Theories of society have enormous power and go far to bring about that which they profess to be true. The fact that the realist theory is beneficent and that the collective theory is disastrous is perfectly relevant to the question of their respective truth and error. If we compare their practical effects we find that the realist theory produces a high regard for persons. Perceiving our land and its people as a home in which we are guests for so brief a term, and understanding what we owe to it (for we owe everything), we shall think vastly more of it than if it were the mere collection of others with ourselves; and knowing that our neighbour,

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however much more he may be, is no less than England, we shall think more, and differently, of him also. A profound patriotism will become our second nature. Again, the realist view of society is confident with a reasonable hope, but the other theory is really desperate. For as real society has its own life within itself, which serves and is served by the fulfilment of personal lives, it is capable at any time of refreshment, healing and fruitfulness, so that our present situation, though bad enough, is one in which no degree of hopefulness can be extravagant. Any attempt to reform this majestic work, which does not regard it in its true nature, and is not in accordance with the laws of its being, which are also the laws of our being, must be, not only a failure but an added injury. But every submission to it, or love of it, or suffering for it, is a working together with Nature, with incalculably beneficent results. And finally, the realist view actively renews and builds up society; but the collective or individualist view, with its denial of real society, actively breaks down that internal cohesion which is society, crumbles

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the goodly fabric into powder, and brings the people more and more every day under the tyranny of absolute government.

If we elect to follow the realist theory of society, as opposed to the individualist and collective theory, we shall inevitably adopt methods of social reform which are altogether different from the methods which are generally understood at the present day. For working with Nature, or rather, submitting to her, is altogether different from elaborating artificial expedients in disregard of her.

#### IV

### OUR OWN PLACE IN THE PROBLEM

THE realist theory of society, and the collective or individualist theory, lead us respectively to very different conclusions with regard to our own place in the social problem. There are, in consequence, two different methods of serving society. One of these methods is true and beneficent; the other is illusory and its effects are harmful. The first is, to recognise the position of submission and dependence, as of a creature immersed in Nature, and so to become lost in the corporate structures of society, as a soldier is lost in his regiment, or a peasant throws his life away upon a few acres, or a mother forgets herself for her children. The other is, to assume the position of deity, as a being exempt from Nature

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and from defect, and to judge, inspect and regulate the poor, and to coerce the people to fit our preconceived notions and schemes, seeking for ourselves, as far as possible, the prerogatives of omniscience, omnipotence and universal benevolence. These are two incompatible methods of social endeavour, and our choice between them will depend upon what we consider to be our own place in the problem. Is our own place above or is it beneath society?

Those who realise how utterly indebted they are to their country, and have considered her beauty and patience, and know that they are as the dust of her roads, will no more attempt to reform her than they will attempt to reform the mountains or the sea. They know too well that the understanding can never track the mysteries of her being. Living their own life in their own place must for them comprehend all real social service. For them, charity will take precedence of understanding, and understanding will by no means dictate the methods and limits of charity. Their own life is for them the social problem. And

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it is certain that in so far as they live as they are meant to live, individuals thereby perform their utmost service to society, and thereby also themselves become the solution of the social problem in all its modes. A renewed rightness and realness of life is in itself the complete and powerful solution of all social problems, and there is no other solution for any of them.

We are in fact subordinate to society, and cannot possibly escape from that position. We cannot, as the reformers attempt to do, stand outside the scene as if we were immortals, and judge it in abstraction from ourselves. That is rightly the way of an artificer with a disordered machine or of a surgeon with his patient; but it is no way for us who are ourselves the elements of a community which is in some way disordered; for the disorder, whatever it may be, affects ourselves. If at any time we think that we are studying and operating upon a system from which we are detached, we are only under an illusion.

This may be illustrated well enough from the analogy of a family. A member of a

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family, in considering its welfare, cannot with truth or with any advantage look on it as a system from which he stands apart and on which he may operate from outside ; he cannot really get outside at all. The family problem, if there be one, is a morbid condition or a difficult situation which inevitably involves him with the rest. The first thing for him to do is to cease to analyse and to judge and to argue the matter. Discussion of the situation is worse than useless. Only true living can solve the difficulty. Let him take all the blame he can upon his own shoulders, abate his own claims, be indifferent to criticism, do his duty and be merry, and all may yet be well.

In exactly the same way, the reformer cannot really get outside of the community, and his impression that he does so is a pernicious dream. He assumes that himself, or his class, or his profession, or his party, is free from the evil with which he attempts to deal. Yet the only thing of which he may be quite sure is that he himself is thoroughly infected with it. We very naturally imagine that it is the other people

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who are the source of the trouble. For instance, people of easy circumstances consider the social problem as a problem of poverty and not a problem of wealth equally; but the poor, on the other hand, consider it as a problem of the monopoly of riches. May not better results be obtained by the forgotten Socratic method of considering ourselves? And if so, is there any norm, or are there any principles, with which we may compare our own way of life?

The error of eliminating oneself from the social disorder may be illustrated from the wealthy landlord of ancient slave-owning days, who lamented the enormous social and economic evils of slavery, although accepting unquestioned the system under which they arose, and especially his own position as a slave-owner. He never dreamed that he was implicated in the social malady as thoroughly as any slave in his possession; yet, though not a slave, he was in every way subject to slavery. He looked with compassion on the misery of the servile population and did his best to mend it. He



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did everything except to consider his own place in the problem. He never considered that he was using men and women principally as means to his own profit and convenience and ostentation, and not principally with a view to their advantage. He would have regarded a non-servile society as unthinkable, and would have resented any questioning of the system to which he was accustomed. After all, his place was the centre of industry and of hospitality for the surrounding country; he brought up, by slavery, his sons and daughters to noble and elegant traditions; and he provided sustenance, humanely enough, for hundreds of slaves who otherwise, said he, would have perished. He could not possibly discover the cause of the evils which he deplored, because it never occurred to him to doubt himself.

The same self-confidence is involved in our modern social reforms. We have recently in England had colossal examples of rash and ignorant legislation, intended in all good faith to ameliorate the condition of the poor; but the same temerity, the same incapacity to

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understand the nature of the social problem, is shown in every effort to doctor society. For this separation of any social problem from oneself or from one's own class, and the study and treatment of it as an abstract condition, have a definite result which hopelessly vitiates the method, however honestly and ingeniously it may be applied. The problem, whatever it may be, assumes a falsely static and falsely limited appearance. In other words, the characteristic limitations of the understanding are imposed upon the real object. The problem therefore appears to be of such a nature that its conditions can be fully analysed and comprehended by the intellect. The symptoms of the disorder — unemployment, overcrowding or whatever it may be—are investigated, and the reformer then assumes that these constitute the disorder, and proposes measures to remove or prevent them. Yet, because the particular distress or disorder does not really exist in this supposed abstraction or separateness from the whole life of the community, as soon as the remedy is set to work it raises evils unknown before. It

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does not merely happen to do so ; it is bound to do so. The reformer's own limitations disqualify him for judging what is the appropriate remedy, and even for judging what is desirable for social welfare, and no amount of investigation or thought or discussion can help him in the least. These limitations may be gross and evident, or if they are generally shared throughout the country they may escape observation. It does not very much matter whether they are the one or the other, for they are not so much the limitations of this man or of that man, as they are the limitations of human nature in respect of society.

Thus, it is recognised at a certain time that the population is at a disadvantage because of ignorance ; compulsory education will set matters right ; compulsory education is set to work and the population vanishes from the country-side. The connection between the cause and the effect is now recognised by every student of the subject, and in country districts is notorious. Some are beginning to understand that what is known in this country as education, giving a false view of life in which "getting on" is the

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leading conception, and representing knowledge as a matter of information rather than as a matter of reverence, was bound to have that effect. A few have discovered that to compel a boy throughout his childhood to sit in shelter all day reading booklets, is not the way to make him follow the life of husbandry. It is obvious now that the remedy, though well meant, was worse than the disorder, for nothing can be worse than the perishing of a rural population. But these things were by no means obvious then, and the error lay in applying such an expedient at all. The intellectualist reformer is incapable of understanding that real popular education, such as was not long ago in Scotland, can only be voluntary; or that even an illiterate man whose dialect is almost unintelligible may be profound, skilful, wise, patient, upright, free; it is hardly too much to say that he is incapable of understanding what education means. So at least we may judge from the fact that our authorities, suspecting at last that their methods have failed in town and country alike, can think of no remedy but to give

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the children more of the same kind of education and to subject them to it for a longer term of years.

Or again, at another time, the country-side stagnates and is impoverished ; local government will set matters right ; county councils, district councils, parish councils are supplied ; they set to work to pass by-laws and to make improvements and to appoint more and more officials and to raise the rates, since all this is what they are there to do ; and, though they are hardly out of their infancy, their interference and their exactions already constitute one of the gravest obstacles to the vital development of country districts. Instances of this kind of error may be multiplied indefinitely. A reform, based on an abstract theory, is enacted ; a generation passes, and the theory is seen to be as absurd and the remedy as ill-advised as those which have preceded them.

It is not thus that social welfare can be served. Change, and the desire for change, and the expectation of change, are in themselves an incalculable evil. They feed excitement and unrest, and there is not a change

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which does not provoke the appetite for more. Every new expedient disturbs the soil wherein germinal realities may grow ; it violates the security wherein men may in some degree calculate the effects of their actions. No one can reckon the sheer waste of time and labour, the dissipation of attention, the empty and illusory discussion, the distraction of men and women from real life and honest work, the enervation of the people by the expectation of public aid, and the debasement of statesmanship from its proper office, which are due to the miserable preddminance of social questions and social reforms. Everyone is eager to doctor society, and society is plagued by their expedients. Yet who can contemplate the inimensity and mystery and vitality of England, and still profess an opinion as to what public and external change would benefit her? Who can foretell what outward phase she is destined to present? Who can say, for instance, what expedient will bring back life to her fields and villages? There is no expedient that will do it. The only thing that will do it is a change of disposition in the people.

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Yet a townsman, a devourer of blue-books, a busybody at clubs and meetings, will pronounce, out of his own ingenuity and the resources of his library, as to the reforms which are desirable in the country-side, and the country people suffer abominably from his ingenuity, and will suffer more. For his intelligence, his activity, and his public spirit are alike in proportion to his invincible ignorance.

Nevertheless, the instinct of the social reformer and social worker is a sound one, though misinterpreted and misguided. The girl who neglects tennis and embroidery and novels to read the reports of royal commissions and to join in study-circles and debates, and perhaps desires the vote, is after something real, though she knows not what. The lad who hungers to be in touch, not merely with particular individuals and concerns, but in some way with the community in general, and so to serve society as a whole, is seeking his own place in the problem, though he knows not where to find it. They are led by a noble desire, which is normally satisfied when the individual is in

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close corporate relations with others within the structures of real society. He is then actually a stone in the tower, a member of the body, an organic part of society, and feels that he is so, and his hunger to be united to the whole body is satisfied. For him humanity itself, the universal, is vividly present in the individuals and concerns which surround him, so that they are no longer mere particulars at all. For example, the soldier loses himself in his regiment and knows that he is serving his country. The duties of his state in life comprehend for him all social service; and the same is fortunately true for many of our people.

But the progressive breaking down of society has brought us into a condition in which many have no corporate relations, or find them intolerable and so reject them, or remaining within them, find that these concrete social bonds seem to restrain them from fresh, vital relations with society as a whole. These are the victims of individualism operating unchecked for several generations. They are members dismembered. Their hunger for some touch with real life in



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order that they may have real life of their own is often intense. They hunger for union with human society and cannot recognise it in the particulars around them, and it is idle to pretend that social value is always evident in these particulars. Thus the daughter of a family whose life is based on ignoble pretensions and exclusions may very well find in her home, not society, but a conspiracy against society. The man who serves a firm turning out bad and useless work, and knows that his duties consist in doing harm, will rightly resent the assurance that to do one's work well constitutes social service. The youth who discovers that he has no root anywhere, no master to obey, no practical responsibilities, no occupation chosen for him, no one who has any use for him, and no clear standards of truth and error, of right and wrong, and of what is worth while and what is not worth while, will long seek in vain for touch with society. These situations, and others like them, are dreadful enough, but are very common. A vast and increasing number, through no fault of their own, are cut off from vital relations with the

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social body. Desiring all the more ardently to unite themselves with humanity, yet having no effective station in life and so no practicable duties of their station, they cannot find society itself, the concrete universal, vividly present at their very door, but must go out to seek an abstract universal (for they know no other) by taking thought and labour for the entire collective multitude of the people.

Their activities are, therefore, not only in accordance with the collective or individualist theory as opposed to the realist theory, but are produced by the disintegration of social life which that false theory has brought about. The so-called "social sense" or "social conscience" arises chiefly from a certain homelessness or desolation which is very characteristic of our time. That is not to say that the social distresses which it discovers are unreal. But while sensible of these in an exaggerated degree, it is insensible to the far graver disorder which lies beneath them. It is unconscious of the social disintegration, and of the superlative need of that real,

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vigorous, youthful life which alone restores society.

To think of social work as distinct from other work, or of the social interest as distinct from any other interest, or of a life of social service as distinct from other ways of life, shows, indeed, not a social sense, but disastrous insensibility to the claims of society. All work, life, suffering, thoughts and affections are social service or dis-service. Living for society, for our country, is the vocation, not of some here and there, but of all ; it is not one special work among others, but includes, unites and transforms all our life. This, if we understand and act upon it, is very far from being a platitude.

## V

### COHESION

WE have often heard it remarked that if men were only to observe the two supreme precepts, which enjoin the love of the Divine Majesty and the love of our neighbour, social disorders and distresses would soon be at an end. And then the speaker, assuming, apparently, that this way of social restoration is not to be hoped for, has proceeded to advocate some more practical substitute, in the form of one or other of those external and partial expedients by which it is vainly sought to heal the wounds of our people. Or, having remarked that, to a community which seeks first the Kingdom, all prosperity shall be added, he has gone on to explain that if we seek first all prosperity, we shall in the end be not very far from the Kingdom. He believes the truths of religion, yet

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imagines that they are true only in some rarefied way which it is impossible to define. And this failure to understand that they are on the contrary cold fundamental fact, betrays him, in this matter, into certain notable errors.

In the first place, he ignores the fact that our community, as it stands, is alive with just this heavenly charity and its fruits. He is unaware how sound England is at heart; how, with all the deterioration and troubles, love of the supreme perfections and selfless devotion to the nearest glow powerfully throughout her. He is conversant with the miseries of the poor, but not with their heroic virtues; he is familiar with the material achievements of the middle class, but not with their compassion, which is baffled every way by sophistications. The fact is that the true way of social restoration, which he is content to name and to dismiss with a sigh, is actually at work upon a prodigious scale and with prodigious virtue.

Secondly, he forgets that the increase of any effect is to be secured only by the increase of its proper, natural, historic cause,

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and not by the introduction of novel expedients. Where homes already flourish, where industry, patience, courage and contentment go hand in hand, where none is friendless or uprooted, where good thrifty management, traditional domestic skill and honest hospitality make social life wholesome and abundant, we know that the cause of all this has been simple, central and spiritual. This effect, where it exists, was not produced by legislation, nor by administration, nor by inspectors, visitors, lecturers and social workers, nor by philanthropic committees and public subscriptions, all of which, so far as the desired result is concerned, are perfectly worthless. If we desire to increase real social life, which is the effect, we must desire first the reinforcement and liberation of its proper, natural and historic cause, which has been a fuller realisation of the supreme precepts.

Finally, he fails to understand that our people are hungry for truth and reality of life and are sick of sophistries. While he is taking for granted that they have no effective desire for charity, a vast number have in fact no other desire at all comparable to

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this, and are ready to lose everything and to suffer anything if only they may thereby be or do or suffer or unite themselves with—they know not what—the heart of the matter. They no longer believe that Parliament can do for them that which they have to find for themselves, nor do they now expect anything from public agitations and discussions. They know that intellectualism is one colossal fallacy. They are weary of distractions, and want life. Opulence, ease, cleverness, variety, magnitude, noise, swiftness, delight them no longer; they want life which shall be the life of all. The love of the Eternal and of man belongs to their nature, as it belongs to the nature of every one who is born into this world, and they will make short work of the sophistications which impede them from it.

But if we are to seek the utmost from this true way of social regeneration, we must clear away a very disabling error. It is to the effect that outward acts and relations are irrelevant to the inward spirit, so that the latter may be in accordance with the supreme precepts, although the former are dictated by the fashion of the hour. This error of

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idealism and sentimentalism, as opposed to realism, infects our life in every direction. The outward structure and texture of life should, on the contrary, be vividly and realistically identical with the wholesome spirit. Not indeed in a fantastic or wilful way, as if for show or for amusement ; but with courage, for the sake of truth and of liberty. Acts and affections are indissolubly one, and it is impossible that either should flourish when their unity is violated. The supreme precepts are concerned with acts ; and sentiments unrealised in action are an unhappy perversion. Let us see how these precepts, released in a realistic way throughout the whole extent of personal life, afford the practical and final solution of the social problem in all its modes.

Looking upon society as a mechanism and not as a living work of nature, social reformers continually speak of the "machinery" of society. But they fail to observe that while they are adjusting this supposed machinery, the metal of which its parts are composed is undergoing molecular change. It is vain to adjust the machine, if



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the metal is assuming under their hands the consistency of chalk or of clay. Yet a change of that kind is actually taking place. The molecule of steel coheres powerfully to its neighbouring molecules in all directions, but the molecule of chalk or of clay does not so cohere. The degeneration from the former consistency to the latter would consist in the diminution of an interior force. In like manner the social degeneration consists in the diminution of the interior force of cohesion in the hearts of men.

Everything shows that there has been a great change of this kind. No relation is so secure, so deeply founded, so likely to be rich and permanent, as it formerly was. The marks of cohesion are that loyalty, devotion, and the quality of work and service can be counted on; that friendship will flourish, and that people will stick to one another through thick and thin; that they will remain, on the whole, in the same place; that the mutual responsibilities of master and servant will be felt on both sides to extend far deeper than cash relations; that the aged and infirm can count on willing support by

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their relatives; that there will be obedience to parents and reverence for age and for authority; that men and women alike will take a life of arduous work and many privations as a matter of course, and not seek chiefly amusements and luxuries; and that interest will generally centre in the home and in the parish. These are often called "old-fashioned virtues," and the phrase itself confesses that they have largely passed away. Instead of these we see a great predominance of money and of desire for money; an easy and frequent exchange of possessions, localities and human relations; the bond between master and servant degraded to the level of purchase and sale of services; a deterioration of the quality of service; a growing thirst for amusement and excitement; and a general worship of success, ostentation and luxury. All these are marks of individualism.

By ignoring this process of rotting, or debasement of the material of society, the social reformer overlooks the one fact of supreme importance in the whole field of his inquiry; and the same ignorance blinds him

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to the real nature of his efforts to relieve social ills. The expedients which he puts forward by way of remedy have the general effect of assisting this social dissolution. Their remedial quality depends upon the fact that they diminish the forces of cohesion and thus afford a momentary relief at the cost of aggravating the disorder. It is fatally easy to alleviate situations of strain by relieving people of their responsibilities. But inasmuch as every step of this process is in favour of individualism and of the consequent political tyranny, it is a step in the wrong direction; for the contrary organic cohesion is not so much a means to social welfare as it constitutes social welfare. The powerful inner cohesion *is* society, and its disappearance is the negation of society.

The interior force of cohesion is good-will, and its contrary is self-will. Good-will, therefore, the principle of all virtue, has been evaporating away; and self-will, the principle of all evil, has been crystallising in its place. There has been a progressive deterioration of the material of society. We do not mean that there has been any

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degeneration in the natural capacity of our people for social virtue. They have the inalienable appetite for cohesion ; but the fact is that they do not cohere as formerly. There can hardly be any doubt as to the reason of this change. It is not that the interior force of cohesion has been diminished below its natural strength. But it has declined very far, and is further declining, from the power to which it had historically been raised. Christianity raised it to an amazing power, and continued throughout the centuries to fertilise the world with social virtue ; so that there arose a wealth of institutions, customs and traditions, which constituted a treasury of good-will, fixed in the structure of mediæval life. The profound popular regard for sanctity, in those days, is evidence of the supreme place which selflessness and the love of God and of man then held. The people then venerated the graces which build and renew society as highly as the people of our day venerate the individualistic and predatory successes which destroy society and oppress the poor.

It is often said that it does not very much

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matter what we believe. But it certainly matters very much, in the long run, to human society. As the true teaching, that we are members of one another, built up society, so a false individualistic teaching accelerated the undoing which luxury had begun. When people were taught, for generation after generation, that the principles which had historically made for supreme interior cohesion were worthless, progressive disintegration was bound to follow. When they were taught, contrary to the most majestic pronouncements which have ever been made in this world, that submission to the bond of unity, and the charity which endures all things, were no longer necessary ; when they were taught that the actions and sufferings which do most to strengthen human fellowship, such as the just life, merciful deeds, and the pain of bearing with difficult people, had not after all the significance which had been given to them ; when religion deserted society ; it was inevitable that social dissolution should follow.

Yet the treasury of good-will, fixed in the social texture, was not at once depleted ;

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and even now, when individualistic principles are generally predominant, our civilisation continues to live on its capital. But the treasury is not inexhaustible. The customs, standards, meanings, and traditions crumble away; and with them the interior cohesion, the old-fashioned virtues which are the only social virtues, disappear also. Every generation, every decade, every year, something is lost. And it seems evident that the interior force of cohesion may continue to diminish to an unlimited extent, and that this diminution may even result in complete decivilisation, without the smallest diminution of the generalised sentiments of good-will, such as are known as the "social sense." For that reason these sentiments, and the studies which they promote, and the remedies which they put forward, are perfectly worthless as a preventive of continued social deterioration. For the purposes of society it is desirable, not that individuals should feel and act benevolently to society in general, but that they should subordinate themselves, abandon themselves, and lose themselves in the actual people who are around them.

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This is the interior cohesion which constitutes society.

For any restoration of the inner force of cohesion, we must therefore look elsewhere than to the increase of compassionate feelings and beneficent activities directed to the welfare of society in general. And inasmuch as this force of cohesion does not consist in sentiments at all, but in a greater or less degree of selflessness, we have to look elsewhere than to the increase of affection even to the nearest. Good-will is a habit of will and not of sensibility. It is a matter of principle. Therefore we must get back the true teaching, the teaching that built society, for without that there is no hope. In the second place, good-will comes to us incorporated by Nature and by history in the home and in our country, and in the Church; and to understand and realise our heritage as far as we can is greatly to strengthen society. In the third place, recognising that this interior cohesion is the substance of all social welfare, we may take a practical stand on its behalf. Let us consider this last point, which is too much neglected,

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though it goes to the root of the social question.

Every one admits that security is the first requisite of a civilised life. Governments, navies and armies, courts of justice, police, all contracts and engagements, exist for the purpose of establishing security. There can be no prosperity where the security of life, of industry, of property or of social relations is shattered. There can be no prosperity where the future is incalculable from week to week, where the relations upon which livelihood depends are in continual danger of dissolution, where anxiety and suspicion have taken the place of mutual confidence and fidelity, and where the life of many thousands of families is daily at the mercy of ignoble contingencies which no one can foresee, or of arbitrary actions and speculations which no one can prevent or call in question. Any such state of affairs is in itself social disorder and distress. Yet this is our condition. The present industrial methods at once create and depend upon the insecurity of the worker. His tenure is limited by a week's notice and is worth

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a few shillings. When for any reason there is no longer need for him, he must go. What shall he do? That is his business, not his employer's. It is an inhuman relation, which more than any other demonstrates the breakdown of social cohesion.

The workman who regards his assistant only as a tool, and drops him the moment it does not pay to keep him for a week or two, may save himself from momentary inconvenience, yet only at the cost of far-reaching injury. As for himself, he is likely thereafter to get the miserable assistance which he deserves. To the man now wandering he has made life seem hard and inconstant instead of secure and fertile. Rather than suffer a little he has lent his hand to the destroyer. If, on the contrary, he had shared with his journeyman a time of difficulty, who does not know that it would have been repaid a hundredfold?

In our time, when insecurity is the rule and not the exception, it is always possible to take a practical stand for security and cohesion, and any act of that kind is repaid beyond all measure. The circumstances, of

course, vary indefinitely, but a strain of some kind arises in which we can escape inconvenience or privation or suffering by letting some one go. It may be a relative, dependent, master, servant, fellow-workman or friend; the circumstances vary, but the opportunity for choice is ever arising. The waves of fortune come along, and we may avoid them so that they batter with redoubled force upon our neighbour; or we may meet them together with him, and they are then transformed into precious and unimagined gifts. The question is whether we are willing to suffer in some way for the sake of security and cohesion. And considering all that cohesion means we can find only one answer to that question. It is worth while to suffer anything in the cause of cohesion.

The decision to accept the suffering rather than let our neighbour go is the love of the neighbour in realistic form. It is the affirmation of the first principle of society as against the self, instead of the affirmation of the self as against the first principle of society. This determination gives life to human fellowship, and without it nothing else will do so. Its

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worth depends upon the fact that it involves risk and suffering. It is therefore of quite another order than the ideals of so-called social service, which are limited to helping others or improving them, while keeping oneself free, secure, at ease, and in command of the position. It is to confess that the neighbour's value is exactly the same as our own; that the differences by which we are separated as individuals are nothing, but that those personal matters in which we are identical are everything. It is in accordance with, and not contrary to, our actual membership of one another, and is powerful just because it is the doing of the truth. By abandoning our own independence and security, we receive life in exchange. This cohesion, that is to say charity, is the soil from which all gracious things arise. Here is where we may look for real social life, a freshness and richness in all relations, the perpetual newness which is far more than novelty.

There is no limit to the effects of decisions and acts of this kind. They are obviously so central and fundamental as to provide

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healing for all social disorders and distresses, and to liberate again all wealth and beauty. They are powerful beyond all estimation, so that it is absurd to refrain on the ground that the acts of an isolated and obscure person can have little consequence. As a solution of certain crystalline materials remains fluid until some minutest particle of a crystal is thrown in, and the whole mass then swiftly consolidates into its native form ; so this community of ours, so gravely disintegrated and dissolved, awaits only more liberal sufferings worthy of human fellowship, a more realistic adhesion to the supreme precepts, in order to recover the native strength of real society. No one delights in this dismal confusion, this mass of maimed, dreary, aimless life in every class ; there is no unwillingness for social regeneration ; there is only a disabling failure to understand that the way to that regeneration consists in serving society in one's own place, by deserting one's own security and affording the utmost security to others.

It is obvious that the security which is thus established is of a far higher order than that of mere physical maintenance, and can-

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not, therefore, be at all replaced by the pensions, insurances against sickness and unemployment, and other provisions against insecurity which are becoming so prominent a feature of modern politics. These contrivances plainly do nothing whatever for society, and only assist its disintegration. At best they can do no more than alleviate the hardships which are caused by that process of crumbling, and the alleviation which they offer is of a very partial kind. It is well to remember this, because our people are more and more taking for granted that public assistance will compensate for anything; that is to say, that money will compensate for anything. But if a man be dismissed from the work in which he is skilled, from his accustomed place and from his friends, no pension can make good his loss. If he fall ill and be removed from the care of those whom he knows, a weekly payment may save him from physical privations but will not give him the moral comfort which is his due. No financial device can compensate for insecurity.

True security raises every relation to its highest value. Under conditions of security

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the services rendered on either side are no longer matters of bargain and compromise. Instead of divergent interests there is one common interest; and this common interest is no longer limited to particular finite ends, but becomes as wide and as deep as life itself. Therefore security, or realised charity, is the only thing to seek for, because all wonderful and gracious social gifts are only its fruits. Where, on the contrary, there are conditions of insecurity, the relation is at best a poor one, and readily turns to active antagonism.

Inasmuch as cohesion is the first condition of human society, and is in itself sufficient to heal all social ills and to bring forth all social fruits, and, moreover, is a submission to the Dominion which is before and above all things, so that it is invincible, we cannot but stand out for it at every cost. It is the only way of social welfare, and we must go this way or fall into ruin. Moreover, it has to be sought for its own sake; no legislative adjustments, nor economic changes, nor anything of lower order than its own, can restore charity.

## VI

### SERVING AND BEING SERVED

ALTHOUGH the social problem is by no means peculiar to England, our country has, in this matter, a singular responsibility among the nations of the west. The task of solving the question, and of carrying the solution into effect, falls upon her and upon no other people. This is because she has worked out, further than any other community, the consequences of social disintegration. No other country bears in proportion so vast a burden of unproductive ease and luxurious expenditure. In no other country have the people in so large proportion deserted the land for the towns. In no other country does the proletariat bear anything like so great a proportion to the entire population. No other country has the mass of destitution and misery that we have. It is true that

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the same predatory spirit of gain and mastery and success, which has wrought such havoc here, is far more ruthless in the United States and in the younger British dominions; but these communities have still wide space and abundant material resources, and are living, as it were, upon their capital. On the other hand, the French, German, and other continental peoples have never been so thoroughly imbued as the English with this predatory spirit. Yet all western nations are going the same way, with identical results, and England differs from the rest chiefly in respect that she has gone furthest along the way, and has come first to an inevitable choice of roads. The question is the old question of liberty.

The social disorders and distresses arise from the exploitation of necessitous people for private profit, convenience, and ostentation. This exploitation has created within recent times that class of the population which is known as the proletariat, consisting of those who are dependent upon wage-earning for their livelihood, and expect to leave their children in the same condition.



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It binds a large section of our people to an existence which is unsuited, in an intolerable degree, to the proper purposes of life, starving and suffocating the normal development of human beings. It degrades the population so gravely as, in the end, to threaten the existence of our civilisation. The workers are finding out more clearly every day how intolerable it is, and it more and more outrages the general conscience.

All the tendency of our time is to extend and confirm this virtual slavery, while mitigating as far as possible the hardships of those who are subject to it. The wage-earning class forms an ever-increasing proportion of the whole. The smaller employers everywhere give way before the larger man ; separate undertakings are swallowed up in far-reaching combinations ; and even entire industries, or a collection of industries, may come under the rule of a small financial group. Thousands of former employers and their children are thrown into the ranks of the wage-earners, and in one industry after another it becomes nearly impossible to set up a small business. Thus

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the exploitation of men and women for private profit becomes ever more inexorable, and what was formerly the profit of many becomes the profit of fewer and fewer. Shareholders are, indeed, nominally employers and participators in profits; but unless they are in the management or have inside knowledge they are really neither the one nor the other, but are merely money-lenders, receiving an interest proportionate to the security of the enterprise; while the profits, beyond that rate of interest, go to speculators who are in the know. An ever more powerful plutocracy, though not in this country so definitely organised as in America, exploits the people for private advantage. Moreover, the increase of communal employment by governing bodies, such as the municipality and the state, further restricts the opportunities for individual enterprise, and raises still further the proportion of wage-earners to the entire population. The tendency of our time is to transform us more and more into a nation of wage-earners, and to make escape from that condition more nearly impossible.

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Our working class, and our social reformers and legislators, undertake vast agitations and labours in order to alleviate the hardships which are caused by this baneful system. But they do not seek to destroy the system itself, nor to arrest its advance, nor to undermine its power. They aim only at making the servitude more tolerable; and so they miss the point altogether, because the hardships which accompany the servitude are not so great an evil as the privation of liberty. The former indeed cause untold suffering; but the latter results in a profound deterioration of manhood, tending to make personal life poor, mean and cowardly, such as cannot be the basis of a strongly coherent and vigorous social life. Socialism, that is to say the collective ownership of the means of production, claims that it would sweep away the hardships which attend exploitation of the workers for profit; but it is justly resisted on the more important ground that it would restrict to an unprecedented degree their personal liberty. The social question is the old question of liberty, under a new phase.

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The introduction of machinery, the consequent factory methods of production, and our colossal system of transport and distribution, have made it possible to employ men and women in a more multitudinous and less personal way, and in a more specialised and less human capacity, than was formerly on the whole possible; and have therefore resulted in an organised system of inhuman servitude, which has extended even to occupations which do not involve machinery. Under these novel circumstances the wage-relation has shown weak points which could not have been previously suspected. It is nominally the same thing as it used to be, but is actually something quite different.

Abstracted from the concrete human bond between master and man, wherein the money-wage and the specified services were only part of a far wider and deeper relation well rooted in custom and tradition, the wage-relation has lost all social value, that is to say, all value of cohesion. There are here and there blocks of fifty thousand and of a hundred thousand working men, who

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from one year's end to another never come into contact with anyone who is not of their own class. They could not be more thoroughly separated from the rest of the community, even if they were a subject race speaking a different language. Degraded thus from all social value, the wage-relation is reduced to the bare sale of so many hours of labour for so much a week. But no one who knows the actual conditions will pretend that the sale is in our time free. It is a forced sale. Rarely indeed can the manual or clerical worker choose; there is no alternative to wage-earning; he has no funds wherewith to stand out and wait; the competition is such that he must take what he can get. And now, mark the conditions of his servitude.

He has to work all day throughout the years, not for his own profit nor for the profit of his children, nor with any hope of their emancipation, but for the profit of someone whom perhaps he has never seen. He does another's will, generally without the least desire to do him personal service, or the least interest in his employer's inten-

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tion. He works only for the sake of the wage; it is mere pot-boiling. Generally his labours are monotonous, highly specialised, without interest, and so narrow as to employ only a minute portion of the range of his powers. The work turned out by his employers is often of a worthless kind, of bad quality, or of ignoble form. Rarely does his task admit of joy in it, or of the love of perfection, but only of a certain standard of accuracy. Moreover, this forced occupation is carried on in a dismal place; the worker's home is in a dismal street; and his wage is barely enough to live on. His tenure even of this undesirable job is precarious; he may at any time be turned off through no fault of his own nor of anyone else; he will almost certainly be turned off long before he is old, and for him then there will be no other job. And all the time the cost of living is rising and will rise. It is not unreasonable to call this a system of inhuman servitude.

We need not conjecture what is the utmost that may be done, by the method of expedients and alleviations, to diminish the hard-

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ships of the servitude. For, in the first place, that empirical method can in no case cope with the accumulating revenge ; so that notwithstanding the enormous amount which has been done in this way by legislation and by the various modes of combination among the workers, the mass of distress increases. Secondly, it does not take at all into account any of the profounder factors in the situation, such as the rise in the cost of living, or the daily more uncompromising discontent, or the rapid depletion of our store of coal, or the probability of war, or the inevitable diminution of the foreign markets upon which this reckless industrialism depends ; so that its considerations and its measures are inadequate to the scale of reality. We cannot foretell future events, but we may at least recognise that things happen with a magnitude, swiftness and force which are bound to upset any trim external adjustment of social difficulties. And thirdly, those who are given to this empirical method lay out all their designs upon a scale which is utterly inadequate to human nature, so that they are satisfied with the condition of

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a man, for example, who labours all his life in servitude upon a sordid undertaking which is useless or even harmful to society, if only he be endowed thereby with some wretched degree of comfort and respectability.

The real question lies far deeper than comfort and respectability. It is a question of liberty. The wage-relation was known to our fathers with honourable associations of liberty, security and humanity; but new conditions have arisen, with the result that it has lost, on the whole, its former quality. Under these new conditions we cannot avoid revising our attitude to wage-employment, just as it became necessary in the course of time to take a new attitude to slavery, and on the same grounds. The extreme disrepute in which slavery is now held has by contrast lent unmerited distinction to the system of wage-employment. Many conclude without reflection that all which is not bond-service is freedom; and because slavery is unjust they believe that the wage-relation is inherently just, so as to justify all its modes. But that is to be misled by mere names. Not all wage-employment is in itself, neces-

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sarily, either just or beneficent, and our industrial system is, in fact, built upon the privation of liberty. It was necessary that the wage system should be developed to the vast extent which we now see before its unsoundness could become evident. Slavery had been clearly condemned for many centuries; yet it was not until the development of America resulted in an enormous extension of slavery and of the slave-trade, and in many great abuses, that the system was in the end felt to be intolerable. In the same way the discovery of machinery has resulted in an enormous extension of wage-employment, in the creation of a wage-earning class, and in manifold great abuses, so that in the end the industrial system, of which the wage-relation is the only foundation, is also intolerable. Slavery became practically unworkable, and wage-employment is going along the same road. And just as the rejection of slavery deepened the general sense for liberty and raised by one definite step the general estimate of what is due to all human beings, so the rejection of bare wage-employment, which is making itself felt in

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several tentative and inadequate forms, will be at once the effect and the cause of a deeper and more realistic respect for personality.

The miserable condition of our wage-earning population becomes very evident when we consider what liberty means. It surely means that a man do that wherein his heart is; and that his heart be set in noble objects, that is to say, in the things which are proper to humanity and are truly desirable; and further, that he be ready to suffer greatly for liberty. But as for our people, the heart has too much gone out of their life. Freemen do that wherein their hearts are; live real life, wherein act and affection are one; do the works which are normal to human powers. Each thus gives to society, not chiefly some marketable task-work, but chiefly a life, a free person, a free family. The things which are done and made are the things which are necessary and desirable, and are dictated by the will to do them and by the love of perfections. But the works of a servile people differ far from the works of freemen. They are mercenary;

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their kind and quality are dictated only by the demand; that is to say, by the will to have and to consume, by the love of comfort and of show, by curiosity, and by the craving for amusement, excitement, and novelty. In a free people, right living produces its own noble acts and works; but among our own people, who become ever more servile, human life is subordinated, upon a vast scale, to ignoble desires.

The exploitation of needy people for private profit, convenience and ostentation, is at the root of our social distresses. It has created the proletariat and is the cause of all insecurity. But it lies open to a graver charge than any which can be drawn from its evil consequences. It is in itself the direct frustration of the very purpose of society, because the whole end of society is the fulfilment of personal life, but this exploitation in fact subordinates the higher and truer personal interests of others to the private advantage of the employer. Liberty is indeed a means towards social welfare; but it is also, and much more, the end and standard of social welfare. The condition

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of servitude, therefore, into which our people are becoming ever more helplessly reduced, is not one evil among others, but is the capital evil against which we have to contend. We have to contend not chiefly against the hardships of the servitude, but chiefly against the servitude itself. This is the only way of getting rid of the hardships also.

Our civilisation has come to a degree of senility at which, if it is to live at all, some return must be made to the elementary conditions of social health ; and in considering our own state it is not worth while to have recourse to any but the most fundamental principles of society, which are also the dictates of the simplest commonsense. With one of these principles we have already dealt. If incohesion and insecurity constitute social degeneration, let us by every means realise the membership of one another, making here and there, amid wide dissolution, tiny islands of security. Another, closely related to this, is as simple, and as directly opposed to the primary evil of self-will. If the exploitation and the consequent

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general servitude of which we have spoken be indeed contrary to the highest interests of the community, and responsible for the disorders and distresses with which everyone is concerned, then let us refuse to subordinate the interests of necessitous people to our own profit, convenience or ostentation. That is to say, let us regard all people with whom we have concrete relations, principally as ends, and only afterwards as means; and not principally as means, and then, a long way afterwards if at all, as ends. This is the only way in which we may contend against the servitude and its consequent hardship; all other ways are little more than make-believe.

To consider men and women and children principally as ends, and only afterwards as means, is to act in accordance with reality; for personality is the end of society itself and of all social relations. Our customary practice is in this respect, however, very far from being in accordance with reality; and if we allow this principle to modify our private life, whether domestic, industrial or professional, like a yeast or ferment it will

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be found to go much further than is at first sight evident. It may justly be called a ferment, because once this principle has entered a man's intention he will find no way of getting rid of it ; it knows no compromise and will work itself out to the end.

We are not dealing, either here or elsewhere, with questions of justice or of moral right and wrong. If anyone says that he has a right to make the best bargain he can with a needy workman, or to throw out of doors one who has grown old in his service, or to keep a company of servants in idleness, or to spend his income on luxuries, we have no interest whatever in denying his claim. Judgments of abstract right and wrong, when they pass beyond their proper authorities and their proper sphere, are false and tyrannous. When therefore we show that it is a mistake to use others chiefly for private profit or convenience, we do not at all mean that this may not justly be done ; and the same distinction applies to every other consideration throughout these pages. This caution may perhaps be necessary, because so many are ready to translate every argu-

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ment into terms of right and wrong, almost without knowing that they are doing so. We only say that in all these matters there is a better way; better because it is more profoundly in accordance with reality, and because it liberates and enriches human life, and because it is the solution of the social question.

We are in the presence of social disintegration and bondage, and corresponding with these an extraordinary deadness and dulness of personal life; and seeking some escape from these evils we are forced to go down to the first truths, and to ask whether the remedy may not consist in making our own ways reflect in some degree those primary realities. For example, every human being is of inestimable value, which cannot in accordance with truth be subordinated to partial or to alien ends. If we live in familiarity with that primary fact, would it be wonderful, let us say, that our own household, built upon the servitude of necessitous people, should come to seem false and trivial, and at last even intolerable? No one can say that a sense of that kind is too curious, for that

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same dignity of human beings is inevitably the norm of choice and of refusal in all social considerations; nor that it is impotent, because that sense of human dignity has in historic fact been the single purifier.

This does not by any means prevent making use of the services of others. But to recognise, as a matter of course, that the people around us have indeed inestimable dignity, is in effect to subordinate ourselves to them and not them to ourselves. It is to deal with them principally as ends and only afterwards as means. But this in turn signifies establishing with them, more or less explicitly, a relation appropriate to that attitude; and this relation, by whatever name it may be called, and whatever subordinate conditions of wages and of services it may or may not specify, is essentially the family relation. As the social degeneration has consisted in the impoverishment and contraction and disintegration of the family, so the regeneration of society will proceed by the renewal of the family.

Every relation of which the members are regarded as ends and not as means, as per-



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sons to be defended and served and not as tools to be used nor as pleasures to be enjoyed, is essentially stable. Security and fidelity are not added to the relation, as if it could exist without them ; they belong to its inner quality ; it cannot truly exist for a day except it be founded in loyalty. But relations of this secure and permanent kind are modes of the family relation, which is the type of all social structure. The family is more also, but it is at least a group of whom every one is regarded only as an end and not at all as a means. A mother never asks what any of her sons is worth to her, nor what purpose he serves, nor whether he is any longer needed ; he himself is his worth, and his purpose for her is to be served. The family is the pattern and basis of all human relations, because its end is the mutual service and fulfilment of all its members. The same end is equally conspicuous in the religious community, where also it implies the same permanence and security. But this regard for the inestimable value of human beings has also to be brought into every relation which involves any considerable

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effect on the lives and fortunes of its members ; and in so far as it is so introduced it inevitably gives to these relations the character of richness and of permanence, so that they become, in effect, family relations. And thus home life, which has been robbed of nearly everything, begins to regain its own.

## VII

### LABOUR

THE great practical task before our people is to raise manual labours once more to their due place in social estimation. If this restoration of labour be possible at all, it will be the work of more than one or two generations. It has to meet enormous prejudice and to overcome deeply rooted weaknesses of human nature. It will be brought about, not chiefly by direct efforts, but chiefly as the result of a far profounder change. Never, since the earliest centuries of the Christian era, was this task so necessary or so difficult as it is now. Yet it has been accomplished before and may perhaps be accomplished again. Only in proportion as manual labour is honoured and desired will there be any true solution of the social problem

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or any real promise for the future of our civilisation.

It is very difficult to gain a normal idea of the elementary labours by which society lives, because they have for the most part been deeply degraded, and we naturally think of them under the debased forms to which we are accustomed. They have been constantly depreciated by thrusting them upon defenceless and unwilling people, and by thinking it an advantage to be rid of them. At various times and in various places they have been thrust upon women, or upon slaves, or upon people of low caste, or upon alien races, or, as among ourselves, upon a disinherited proletariat, being regarded in every case as inferior and unwelcome occupations. In our own time, everyone is ready to assent to phrases about the dignity of manual labour, but everyone tries to better himself by escaping from it as from degradation. And labours of this kind have been further debased by the servility of the class upon whom they have been forced and the badness of the work which is consequently done.

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Moreover, it is impossible to see these works in their true value, so long as we are always comparing them to their disadvantage with other less useful and desirable occupations, supposed to be of a higher order. There are indeed most necessary works which are in a sense of a higher order, such as the work of the magistrate, soldier, physician, schoolmaster and others, who are concerned with defending and ordering the life of the people ; but leaving these aside we may reasonably make a very general division of human activities into those which are more necessary and desirable, and others which are less so. Under primary labour we may include generally the raising of food, getting fuel, house-building, the making of furniture and instruments, of cloth and clothing, and the cooking, cleaning, and nursing which constitute household work. Primary labour is thus practically equivalent to manual labour, and equivalent also to the work of domestic economy in the wider sense. Beyond these indispensable works there extends a vast range of more or less productive or non-productive activities

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which may be termed secondary, in the sense that they are not so necessary or so desirable as primary work ; though this is not to say that they are all positively undesirable.

Every influence trains us to prefer and to honour any occupation rather than primary or manual labour. We learn insensibly that it is easier and more honourable to live by exploiting labour for profit, or by trafficking, or by letting land and houses for hire, or by money-lending, or by painting or acting or writing, or by speculating, or by parasitic arts, or by any other way rather than by the works which are most useful and desirable for the purposes of human life. Occupations have come to be esteemed in proportion as they win money, afford comfort and leisure, and confer individual power and distinction ; so that pride, sloth, and avarice are all against primary labour.

Again, the man who works with his hands has little inclination for the interests and amusements which are commonly valued as the rewards of labour and the crown of life. Abstract ideas, hearsay from the ends of the earth, concern him little ; he is expert rather

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than intellectual, more wise than curious. Filled with the concrete impressions of his work, the excellences of his craft, or the mere weight of his labours, he has little or no appetite for the fictitious impressions of art. Fatigue turns his leisure to relaxation instead of to social excitement, business, and garrulity. Just because he works with his hands he turns away from the interests which are most coveted and admired. And so people constantly object that if they were to do manual work they would have no time for more important things. But—are there more important things?

It is great gain to return to a true estimate of primary labours, for the entire social problem centres on this point. All social disorders and distresses, and most personal disorders and distresses, are closely bound up with the contempt and abandonment of manual work.

The right appreciation of primary labours is an immediate result of a true view of human society. Under the realist view of society, labours of this kind hold a position of the greatest dignity, because they are judged

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according to their universal and historic worth to the stability and vigour of the community. Judged by this standard, some labours are perceived to be in themselves more worthy than others, irrespective of their rewards to the worker. More worthy because, when freely pursued, they produce real material wealth, a sound population, and a coherent social structure. Different kinds of labour have therefore different degrees of moral excellence, bearing no relation at all to their respective commercial rewards.

But this moral excellence of primary labours is of a higher order than is implied in their material importance to society. They incorporate in a peculiar way the supreme precepts of religion, so that they are intrinsically desirable in the highest degree. As for the first precept, these labours are a realised devotion, so that it has been said that "labour is prayer." They are a realistic rendering of the profoundest truths of our condition. Again, though the work is on one side of it our work, yet it may in itself possess some more august character, impossible perhaps to



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define or to understand, yet often perceived and declared by many. All this has been widely recognised, and many examples might be given of its expression in custom and in literature. As for the second precept, the primary labours are a realised charity. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving shelter to the homeless, they have the character of works of mercy. They are good works, which are intrinsically desirable irrespective of any reward. Once become aware of the dignity of primary labour, and of its purposes, its materials, its products, its obscurity, and its sufferings, and that dignity and desirableness will rise far beyond anything that we venture to indicate.

But under the collective or individualist view of society, which is at present dominant, primary labour cannot but be despised and evaded ; not only because its results for those who are engaged in it, as measured in money, ease, and distinction, are the worst which it is possible to obtain, but even more because the product of any individual worker, when regarded as a contribution to the collective store, is practically nothing. Judged by

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their particular results, primary labours are not worth undertaking. Why should a man renounce his chance of advancement, comfort and pleasure, in order to produce an infinitesimal contribution of the necessary and desirable things? These arduous and lowly occupations may as well be left to those who cannot escape them. It would be absurd to expect one who is capable of work for which there is higher reward to make a renunciation which no one else dreams of making, in order that he may produce what amounts to little more than nothing. So we have one more who lives upon primary labour but puts no hand to it; one more who in proportion to his wealth and artificial wants diverts the labour of ten, fifty, or a hundred poor families from necessary and desirable works to the servitude of luxury, thus making them also parasitic upon primary labour; one more who in proportion to his influence and respectability raises the standard of expensiveness in every direction and so aggravates the burden of poverty in every class; one more denial of the principle of good works. But everyone is striving in that same direction.

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So primary labours are in fact left to those who cannot escape them, and therefore we have the social question.

From the individualist point of view, labour is regarded as a property or function of the individual ; it is valuable in proportion as it is privately distinguished and successful ; and it is to be sold for the highest that it will bring. From the realist point of view, on the contrary, labour is regarded as a property or function of society ; it is valuable in proportion as it is universally necessary and desirable ; and it is to be rendered as due service. But whoever seeks really to serve will incline to do good work—that is to say, to do those things which are most necessary and desirable, and are also most deficient ; just as anyone who seeks to be served will incline to do those things which are most remunerative, and are also comparatively superfluous, justifying his choice by the supposed law of supply and demand. That formula, which belongs solely to the individualist theory, assumes erroneously that the effective demand for things will be in proportion to the need of them. Actually,

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however, market demand and market value have little relation to social need and social value. The will to have and to consume and to be served—that is to say, the demand—cannot determine rightly the application of labour; the right application of labour is determined by the will to produce, to build up, to give, and to serve. It is surely evident that the indiscriminate servitude to the demand is a hopeless abandonment of truth and freedom; and that the determination to do the most necessary and desirable things, which are also the most deficient, is in this matter the only sound principle. The former is the practice of the market; the latter, of the family. But true society is a family, a real brotherhood; it has far degenerated when it becomes principally a market.

The individualist theory everywhere brings about a progressive increase in the part which exchange, or buying and selling, plays in social and domestic life. One thing after another, formerly produced in the home or in the neighbourhood, is later produced only in some great industrial centre or brought from across the seas. The

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abandonment of primary labours has thus caused, and is in turn encouraged by, the development of an enormous system of industry, exchange, speculation, transport, distribution and retail sale, which consists for the most part in an extraordinarily wasteful elaboration of the works of domestic and parochial economy. Its evils are incalculable. It involves the ever-increasing exploitation of labour for profit and the deepening wage servitude; the ever more unrestricted domination of money in every department of life; the progressive substitution of bad and pretentious work for good work; and, perhaps worst of all, an increasing personal helplessness throughout the population. But the outstanding feature of the system is its colossal wastefulness, its prodigious failure to do that for which it is supposed to exist. Was ever before the life of a people given up so utterly to the supposed production of material wealth; or was ever before so vast a mass of indigence actually brought into being? The system is wasteful everywhere: by its unprecedented support of idle comfort and respectability; by its

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innumerable intermediate profits; by its diversion of labour from productive to unproductive activities such as exchange, transport, advertisement, and sale; by its diversion of productive labour from the things which are needed to superfluous things; and by its substitution of rubbish for good work. It fails because it is a sham; because only a minimum of its labour is given to the production of material wealth. No improvement of machinery or processes, no technical education, no efficiency of industry, no increase of trade, no rise in wages, no taxation of the rich and subsidy of the poor, will bring any real amelioration. The excessive poverty which afflicts our people is due to *the great and increasing deficiency of labour given to the production of necessary and desirable things*, and to the inordinate diversion of labour to the production of comparatively useless and undesirable things; and this disorder in the application of labour is the result of commercialism—that is to say, the system or habit by which the application of labour is determined by the market demand. Commerce is not

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in itself an evil ; the evil lies in its undue preponderance.

Labour is rightly applied when it is applied according to social need, and is therefore true social service. We have to recognise once again that some works are in themselves more worthy than others, irrespective of their rewards to the worker ; and that none are worthier than the primary labours upon which the whole of social life depends. In order to show how clearly this principle has been recognised in past times, we quote certain paragraphs from Janssen's *History of the German People at the Close of the Middle Ages*. The first three books of that work, contained in the first two volumes of the English edition, should be read by every student of social questions. No sensible person wants to return, in any particular, to a period which has passed away for ever. We have no desire for the restoration of any of the mediæval social forms ; on the contrary, our country is heavily burdened by the relics, for instance, of the feudal system. But the principles which are illustrated in the following paragraphs are

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not for one age, but for all time. They express degrees of estimation [the italics are our own]:

“Work, and not property, was the bestower of all *worth and dignity*, and to the workman belonged, therefore, the fruits of his work.”

“Among manual industries none stood *higher in the estimation* of the canon law than agriculture. It was looked upon as the mother and producer of all social organisation and all culture, as the fosterer of all other industries, and consequently as the basis of national well-being. The canon law exacted special consideration for agriculture, and partly for this reason, that it tended in a higher degree than any other branch of labour to teach those who practised it godly fear and uprightness. ‘The farmer,’ so it is written in ‘A Christian Admonition,’ ‘must in all things be protected and encouraged, for all depend on his labour, from the emperor to the humblest of mankind, and his handiwork is in particular *honourable and well-pleasing to God.*’ Therefore both



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the spiritual and the secular law protect him."

"Next to agriculture came handiwork. 'This is *praiseworthy in the sight of God*, especially in so far as it represents necessary and useful things.' And when the articles are made with care and art, then both God and men take pleasure in them; and *it is good and true work* when artistic men, by the skill and cunning of their hands, in beautiful buildings and sculpture, spread the glory of God and make men gentle in their spirits, so that they find delight in beautiful things, and look reverently on all art and handicraft as a gift of God for the use, enjoyment, and edification of mankind."

"Trade and commerce were held *in lower esteem*. 'An honourable merchant,' says Trithemius, 'who does not only think of large profits, and who is guided in all his dealings by the laws of God and man, and who gladly gives to the needy of his wealth and earnings, *deserves the same esteem* as any other worker. But it is no easy matter

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to be always honourable in all mercantile dealings, and with the increase of gain not to become avaricious. Without commerce no community, of course, can exist, but immoderate commerce is rather hurtful than beneficial, because it fosters greed of gain and gold, and enervates and emasculates the nation through love of pleasure and luxury.' ”

And finally :

“ Out of solicitude for the working classes it was insisted on in the ecclesiastical law that the inspiring aim of the collective mass of industrial activity must be, not personal interest and advantage, not restless greed for material gain, possession, enjoyment, but the union of the whole body in the bonds of brotherly love.” (ii. 96 ff.)

These principles were at that time universally admitted as unquestionable. It is hardly too much to say that they are unknown to the modern mind. But now that the vast experiment of commercialism has been tried with the results that we know,

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and we have arrived at so critical a moment in our history, and social forms are all in process of transition, we have more need than ever before to observe the architectural principles of society. We cannot doubt that in the time to come elementary truths of this order will be put to use and illustrated in ways now undreamed of which will build up to greater glory than has been known in the past. But the way thither lies through primary labour, and the will to serve, to do good work, and to be nothing.

## VIII

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It is perhaps not too much to say that in four out of every five houses of the middle class the people suffer continually from an ignoble torment. Other sufferings come along in waves, but this is perpetual. Whether the income be five hundred or five thousand a year, it is never quite enough. There is never any rest from making both ends meet. There is for ever the chafing restraint of the figure which must not be surpassed, the reluctant giving up of something which somebody desires, often the heart-sickening weight of debt. The standing charges of the household creep upwards imperceptibly; there is no respite for husband or for wife from miserable calculations and economies, nor any hope that this hateful and unworthy situation

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will ever come to an end. The houses look all right outside, but there is this devastating torment within. We are enslaved to multiplicity, a miserable and degrading bondage; and the only means of relief is to turn one's attention clean round from multiplicity to simplicity, from things to nothingness. The question that liberates is not, "Can we manage to have this or that?" but "What is the next thing that we can do without? What next can we throw out of the window?"

It is not as if this life of comfort and respectability were in itself desirable, either for personal and family ends, or for the sake of social welfare. One would not lightly speak disrespectfully of a result which costs so much effort and suffering to produce, and is apparently so precious to many. But the fact is that if these conventions were not actual they would be incredible. All of it, for which we have to sacrifice life itself, would be incredible—the houses, the furniture, the decorations, the meals, the queer social intercourse, the thin intellectuality and æstheticism which make up its so-called

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culture, the servants and their ritual, the tiny importances and pomposities, the pretences and shutting of eyes to facts, the heartless exclusions and meannesses, the faded, stuffy atmosphere of the family standards and judgments, the dreary complacency and absurd make-believe, the final blend of individualism and materialism, that is to say, of respectability and comfort. It is all, in its way, an attempt toward quality of life; but this multiplicity, sought in order to quality of life, has notoriously the contrary effect; the satiety of comfort dulls appreciation, courage and will, and its distractions shatter reflection. Perhaps the strangest thing about this onerous habit is that often it is a mere conspiracy of delusion; often not a soul in the family really wants it, and everyone is glad to get away from it if only for a day. The husband tolerates it because of his wife; she believes that it exists for him; they both elaborate it for the sake of the children; the children accept it as the ordinance of their elders; and all conspire to preserve it because of the families in the neighbourhood. If the seamy side of

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it is torment, the outer side is tedium. Taking both sides together, it is a miserable bondage to material desires and their satisfactions. If it seemed for a moment desirable, would it continue to appear so when we had remembered that it must forever be out of the reach of the great majority of the population? The expenditure that goes to make it is chiefly unproductive; it is without return in any adequate advantage; its chief effect is to confirm and continue the evil tradition of comfort and respectability. The sons, like their father before them, will go out into the world burdened by these disabling habits, and the daughters, when they marry, will carry this dreadful dowry into new homes. And inasmuch as the scale of expenditure maintained by each family forms the standard of ostentation for every other, there is at last hardly a household in the neighbourhood which is not in effect living beyond its means.

But the financial element in the matter, though intolerably painful and ignominious, is not the greatest of the evils which are involved in this degrading materialism. Life

itself is overwhelmed by the weight of material cares. The man's chief concern must be, not to do good work, but to make an increasing income; yet let him double his income, and within two or three years it will again be not enough. From morning to night the mother's attention is absorbed by an infinity of material concerns, and the shop-boys come with parcels all day long. She will protest that it is all necessary; and so it is, if her life and that of everyone else in the family is to be sacrificed to this all-devouring habit; otherwise it is chiefly unnecessary, and for the most part would be better left undone. The life of the servants is taken from useful work (for little that they do is either of use or of convenience), and is subordinated to the comfortless comforts and unmeaning ostentation of their employers. The children grow up in the perpetual demonstration of the principle which they are to learn before all others—that individual success and the ensuing comfort and respectability are the chief end of man; and when they arrive at maturity they will be fortunate if their nature be not



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warped and their intentions utterly confused by the unworthy standards which we have taught them, not by our words, but by every action of our contemptible lives. Infirm in spirit by dint of these senile standards, they will look out with indolent indifference for any employment which may give them an easy competence, rather than venture upon work in which they believe and rejoice, though it should mean poverty and contempt. For what have they to believe in except respectability, and in what have they learned to rejoice except in comfort? If perhaps they love they will still stay apart while comfort and respectability devour the years; and when at last they marry, comfort and respectability will make them sterile. All this is no exaggeration; we have seen the whole drama enacted again and again.

Bad as this tradition of private luxury is, the corresponding habit of public ostentation is more baneful, because more tyrannous and more powerful to pervert the general mind. If it be desirable that private life should be dematerialised, it is even more important that communal life be de-

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materialised. The latter change can proceed only from the former, in the same sense as lowly houses make lowly streets; but it deserves notice because of a common error. This is to the effect that though we may easily have too much domestic luxury we cannot have too much public luxury and magnificence. So there is a great love of fine streets, swift transport, vast buildings, costly institutions, imposing schools, libraries, museums and the like; and everyone joins to acclaim these things because they are not for individuals or for a class, but for the people. But the fact is that the people do not want these things yet have to pay enormously for them. The public costliness and ostentation only aggravate their poverty, and all the great proud works have the effect of dwarfing and depressing human life. Apart from its own expensiveness, communal magnificence stimulates private display and depraves public taste. The same is true of the commercial luxury and ostentation which have increased so rapidly within recent years, as in the great hotels and liners. It is all profoundly demoralising, and has to

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be paid for in perverted labour and consequent misery and destitution. But this public vainglory has its source in domestic luxury.

Apart from all considerations of social welfare, the abandonment of multiplicity by individual or family is so richly, immediately, and permanently rewarded, that it is difficult to understand why that disposition is not more common. One cause of its rarity, though perhaps not the chief cause, is that the idea, as a practical possibility, has never entered the mind of the vast majority. For that reason it is worth while setting down two or three of the more obvious rewards. In the first place, this method does away, once for all, with the torment of the limit of income. There is no more of that ignominious anxiety about to-morrow ; no more of the vague, uneasy, scarcely conscious hankering after this or that ; no more giving up of something desired. The liberation is incomparably greater than if a fountain of gold were to issue from the ground. Secondly, this relief, precious as the cessation of physical pain, is far surpassed by the

positive inheritance of reality and its perfections, which have been occluded by material multiplicity. It is as if the heir of some ancient castle, which had long been choked with comfort and plastered with decoration, had with sudden insight torn the rubbish from the walls and cleared the floors: "How have I lived here all these years," he would say, "and never known my home!" Thirdly, the rejection of the complications built up under the ideals of comfort and respectability is one of the three or four greatest services that anyone can render to his children. It is happy for them for all their lives if they are brought up in a quiet and lowly home; unhappy for them and for their country if they are made soft and dainty by elaborate comfort and attendance, distracted by multiplicity and novelty, accustomed to costliness, and taught to covet respect and to despise the poor and ignorant. But what we do not for ourselves we cannot do for our children. Fourthly, an inexpensive life frees money for those who are in need of it; the quiet life gives leisure to be with them; and homely

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ways and homely rooms are for them approachable and familiar. Could there be any greater reward than that half one's income should be free for this; or that an income which now supports five should be made to support ten? And finally, so utterly conventional and empty are these artificial wants that whoever liberates himself may liberate many, and at least relieves the pressure over a wider area than he can trace. All these are vast benefits and well worth seeking.

The habit of living for comfort and respectability obviously belongs to the individualist or collective theory of society, and is contrary to the realist view. It is everywhere deeply concerned in the social problem. Thus, it has been demonstrated again and again that income spent on superfluous things is wasted, from the point of view of the commonwealth, as compared with income spent on necessary and desirable things; and that labour which is spent in producing superfluous things is similarly wasted, as compared with labour spent in producing necessary and desirable things.

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It has often been shown that the undue expenditure of income upon superfluities, and the undue diversion of labour to their production, are the direct cause of the undue poverty of the majority of our population, and of their virtual slavery. It has often been shown that habits of luxury enervate a people, giving them old age in place of youth. Yet all argument, so far as any practical result is concerned, has been utterly in vain; and so potent are social habits over popular opinion that luxury is still generally held beneficent because of the employment which it affords. Where so many able writers have failed of practical effect, their arguments, however sound, may be suspected to be of an order inferior to that of the matter itself. No one can hold with any security a conviction which all his doings, for superior reasons, are bound to belie. The final test must, in fact, be quality of life, and not quantity of production or of waste. Many a man recognises abstractly that the superfluities of thousands have these ill effects, but in all the vast process how much part do his own little refinements and comforts play? Practi-

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cally none at all. On the other hand, he considers that these amenities give life all its quality, and perceives that they are required by mere courtesy to the actual order. Obviously the balance of reason is overwhelmingly in favour of doing as everyone else does.

Yet this helpless participation, even for good reasons, in a social tendency recognised to be deleterious, is disquieting. We may have to do it, yet cannot but detest doing it, chiefly because it signifies abandoning the whole practical problem. It means giving up the single problem of civilisation, and, therewith, all those subordinate and partial problems which are known as the social question. For, with many differences, there is a certain general identity in the way in which nations and civilisations grow old and perish. Social senility is characterised by exactly this materialism, luxury, and multiplicity; and a nation which has proceeded far in this decadence is presently at the mercy of a younger and more vigorous people. Very surely the marks of senility are upon our own land. Her invincible apathy as regards provisioning and defence, in a situation

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of great and complicated danger, is one of these evident signs. The depopulation of rural areas is another. The sharp contrast between great wealth and great poverty is another. For us the question, *Can a people be renewed, made young again?* is one of tremendous import. Can England (as we believe she may), while going on to yet nobler achievements in every art of life, still renew her youth continually, so as to become, as it were, a perpetual and invulnerable people? Are there (as we believe there are) sure, practical, simple means lying close to our hand for securing this renewal? May our own country, so long the protagonist of liberty, still lead to profounder liberty? If these questions are in our hearts, it is very disquieting to participate, under any compulsion or for any advantage, in the acknowledged process of her decay. Or rather, it is not possible, it is not human, to do so.

Yet, once refuse to acquiesce in the apparent order, and the scene marvellously changes. That refusal liberates the will from bondage and the understanding from a wilderness of error. Things lately solid, formidable, immov-



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able, are insubstantial as so much mist. Only the act of will was needed. The heartless commercialism, the suffocating materialism, the conventions of respectability, the dead weight of poverty, which had seemed great constituent parts of an actual, real system, disappear as we look past them and pass through them to reality. These are not the real things at all ; these are not human nor of human society ; they are unwholesome phantoms of avarice, pride, sloth, melancholy, and incredulity. The reality is a real brotherhood. The great family is not an ideal but *is the fact* ; and whatever apparent system is in contradiction with this reality is no real system, but is a systematic lie. These bugbears are not the order wherein we are set, but are ideal constructions or sophistications, lending a false reality, authority, and power to the disorders and distresses of the great family. By the refusal to acquiesce we pass through an apparent system of multiplicity to a real system of simplicity.

For example, we have been in bondage to an imaginary claim that we shall live in comfort and ostentation ; it has been a mere

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fancy ; there has been no such claim. We have exploited others with the pretence that we were serving them ; the idea that we were serving them has been a mere fancy. We have refrained from liberality to the poor on the ground that alms will not do away with the poor as a class ; it has been all a mistake ; the class is an abstraction, a fancy, but the hungry brothers have been real. Fancies and delusions such as these, due to the acceptance of an illusory system of multiplicity, are by far the most powerful factors in the disorders. The acceptance of commercialism, the acquiescence in materialism, the connivance in a caste of poverty, have been the chief frustration of effort and of will. We are not really in these bad things except by apathy. But we are all necessarily in a great family with brothers and sisters. The vice of modern social reform and philanthropy is that they work on this plane of illusion and multiplicity ; they have all their being within the false apparent system. The attempt to mitigate the cruelties of commercialism, or to raise the poor as a class to better conditions, is to mistake the issue, to acquiesce in

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unrealities, to act contrary to one's intention, and in effect to labour for evil. For all these things are the several different symptoms or results of a common identical evil, and to accept and to work upon them at all is to accept and to be dominated by that evil. They are a complicated external show which prevents charity and freedom of the will.

Thus, the impulse to serve the destitute, frequent as it is, would be many times more frequent and effective if it were not baffled by sophistications into despair. But let that impulse survive the initial discouragement and become a fixed intention, and it will still be frustrated. A labyrinth of illusion is spread all about it in order that it may be dissipated and may never issue in its own native action. Its true character is youthful, direct and simple; but it must be made old, feeble and confused by social and intellectual multiplicity. So it is quickly loaded with organisation and finance, bewildered by bluebooks, stupefied in committee-rooms, corrupted in drawing-rooms, maddened by agitation and squandered in

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talk ; and the sole purpose of all this, though not the conscious purpose, is that it shall not act.

The baneful multiplicity of our life includes, therefore, far more than that unhappy manifoldness of possessions, comforts, amusements and artificial wants with which we began ; yet all the various modes of multiplicity are one, in the sense that each mode involves the others : and the principal effect of every mode is the same—namely, the diminution and frustration of life. Many are puzzled by a strange sense of helplessness, of being surrounded by invisible and intangible nets, preventing them from action, from the exercise of their powers, from the enjoyment of reality, from generous true intercourse with others, from liberty, from their own proper fulfilment, from more abundant life. These nets are all modes of multiplicity. They are of great interest because they are at once so powerful and so unreal. They are false apparent systems, and their very oppression shows their unreality. They are interwoven of the opinions of others and of deference

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to those opinions; and inasmuch as the latter element is under our own control (for we may look past opinions to reality) the nets are non-existent for whoever likes to walk straight forward. They disappear like so much spider's web. Yet they are very real for many, and are a dismal incubus on our country. That is to say, courage, or more truly simplicity, is deficient. The nets of caste, of respectability, of comfort, of the dominion of money, of intellectualism, and how many others, are all impediments to liberty and real life; but the refusal to acquiesce is enough to destroy them. For they were never real.

The great liberation which comes to our people when they emigrate to a new and undeveloped country is partly due to greater opportunity, but at least as much to the fact that they escape from the tangle of false ideas, false caste, false comforts and respectabilities, from which they have not learned to escape here. They are brought back to simplicity, youth and freedom. But the same gain, in a far greater degree, may be achieved by anyone without crossing the

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bounds of the parish ; and the liberation of even one will go far to renew the life of his country. Beneath all the unspeakable litter and noise, pretensions and nonsense, are forever the things which really matter—our dependence, our nothingness, our real brotherhood—and in order to reach them nothing is needed except lavish rejection. It is worth while, therefore, to reject continually, with joy and courage, with indulgence and humour, because every rejection wins liberty for hundreds.

## IX

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ALL the considerations which have come before us depend plainly upon one central principle. A people is not merely a collection of individuals, but is itself an individual of higher order, having a life of its own which far transcends, and therefore fulfils, the lives of its members. It is thus that we are not merely in contact together, but are members of one another. Of course, all ways of thinking and speaking about a reality of so high an order must be metaphorical; and when expressions are used which imply that humanity is comparable to a living organism, it is well to remember that analogies of this kind are insufficient to the real object. Nevertheless, they may very well be the best available expressions; and where that is so they should be used confidently,

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even while we recognise that they are far inadequate.

Inasmuch, then, as a people has a life of its own, we may also speak of its vitality, health or youthfulness, and again of its disorders or of its senile decay. The analogy is constantly implied by writers on historical and political subjects. There is a youthfulness, and there is a senility, of social life. In the former case the spirit of the people and the minds of its individuals have on the whole the qualities which are familiar to us in the young ; but where social life is senile, as ours has become, the spirit of the people and the minds of its individuals are marked on the whole, even in youth, by the qualities which are generally associated with age and failing powers. Now the entire social problem is, as we have said, "Can a people renew its youth?" The answer is given with unmistakable certainty by history, which has also shown with equal certainty the way of rejuvenescence.

Because we know that social renewal is possible at all times, our method, as we have already seen, must be entirely different from



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that of the modern reformers, who seek to bring about particular results by particular expedients. But those who believe in a real social life will desire rather the intrinsic youthfulness and health of this living body of which we are members; knowing that this natural vigour, and nothing else, will in itself bring forth all desirable fruits and graces. They will not scheme and labour to produce particular social fruits, but will subordinate themselves to the nourishment of the tree on which these fruits normally grow, knowing that fruits of this kind can never be fashioned by artifice, but must issue from the spontaneous principle of life.

The true method of social renewal rests, therefore, upon the fact that there is indeed a principle of social vitality, a substance of all health and fruitfulness, which is the source of national vigour and of all arts, achievements and graces. As the sap renews the youth of the tree, and as the seed renews the wheat every season, so charity makes young again the mind and heart of individual and family and nation. All good things—personal liberty and fulfil-

ment, real material wealth, moderate and generally distributed prosperity, rich home life, manliness and womanliness, military ardour, all human virtues, are one living unity, and consist in this profound substance of life and health. It is not worth while, therefore, to desire anything but charity, for all good things are its fruits. If we want the crop we must sow the seed, and if we sow the seed the crop will infallibly rise, and now with results beyond all imagination. This old and true way is intensive and not extensive, natural and not artificial. It is universally valid, infinitely germinal, and is irrespective of all forms of government, all acts of legislation, all economic and historical differences. These are subject to endless contingency and are comparatively superficial. The scene of human existence will always be one of great and unexpected change, and the hope that external conditions of social welfare will at any time or in any region be perfected and established is quite illusory. But in so far as general welfare, security and richness of life, have existed at any age or among any people,

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they have been the fruits of a certain definite social vitality, and this vitality or youthfulness it lies within our power to achieve.

The remarkable inability of our people to understand the nature of the disorders from which society suffers, is due to their failure to recognise that the living substance of health and of fruitfulness has objective reality, and that every good thing in human existence depends upon the degree in which this substance of charity is liberated to flow throughout society so as to make us explicitly members of one another. Thus, the way to renew literature, for example, is not to labour at writing, nor to criticise nor to teach nor to endow letters, but is to renew social life by the liberation of the single principle of vitality. The way to renew art is not to perfect technique, nor to make novel experiments, but is to realise charity, and so to renew vision, delight and desire. The way to recall our people to military hardness is not to scare nor bribe nor compel them, but is to give them, by the liberation of charity, a life so ardent and

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lovely, a peace so joyous and fertile, that they will be eager to die for it. The way to clothe our waste places with homes and industry, to relieve the destitution of our people, to free them from their virtual slavery, to build up their home life, to make them hopeful and merry and give them once more the song and the dance, is again the same way; it is to liberate life, and more life, and yet more life. Moreover, the life springs up in an incessant fountain. All fruits and graces are given wonderfully in the children who perpetually renew our perpetually dying race; social renewal is an incessant gift and only requires that we should not actively defeat it. The children now among us contain the promise of a regenerated people; it is always no further away than that; it is here already. Their wholesome spirit, in which act and affection and understanding are one, is actually the youth which we are seeking. For that same wholesome spirit, or child-mind, is normal also for every period from childhood to the day of death; though the condition of its continuance is that it should find itself

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always at home, always a member of the great family.

It was thus that early Christianity, by such a liberation of charity as had never been known, renovated human life in all its relations and interests to a freshness like that of a summer dawn. It raised women to an inestimable dignity, recreated family life, restored manual labour to honour, aroused intense personal cohesion among its members, and inspired that youthful alacrity and zest which delight in simplicity. It indeed proclaimed liberty to captives, gave beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

The same charity, again, liberated and realised throughout the whole texture of life, built up the great religious houses, which in the midst of rude peoples and waste lands were centres of mercy, of learning and of the arts, of education and of peaceful industry. There also the principle of social vitality proceeded inevitably to its proper fruits; revealing itself first in the Divine praises, in love of creative perfections and of all creation, and in goodwill toward men ;

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then, in powerful cohesion and absolute security for all, in the rejection of multiplicity, in mutual family service, and in high esteem for the lowliest labours; and finally in abundance, liberality, general prosperity through the neighbourhood, and the steady development of the arts of life.

This rhythmic movement, which appears to be the law of social renewal, may be remarked again and again on the great and on the little scale. The noblest example, after that of the monasteries, is the rhythm which originated with Saint Francis, whose indomitably youthful spirit had so profound an influence on the social, intellectual and artistic life of Europe. A recent student has distinguished this youthfulness as characteristic of Francis and his companions. There was "a certain childlike *naïveté* which came in a greater or lesser degree to all the brethren in their new vocation. In some it was combined with a shrewd knowledge of the world or with a native dignity of bearing, or with a high natural intelligence; but all in some measure were endowed with it. They all had something of the open-eyed

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wonder, and the intentness on the present moment which is characteristic of early youth." Well, that youthfulness, with its immediacy and spontaneity, is the renewal of social life; and it originates in the Divine praises.

Social welfare is, in fact, not a proper end of endeavour at all, and least of all is it the end of any real religion. It is properly a by-product, yet one not difficult of attainment. Let us take once more a homely illustration from the family. There are few ideals more disastrous than the ideal of the happy home. As soon as the welfare of the family becomes an end or a standard, so that any stress or suffering is taken to be something that must be avoided at every cost; as soon as its internal complacency is permitted to check the fulfilment of duty; as soon as the windows are closed to the breeze and the blinds are drawn down against the sun, and the doors are shut against coming and going, the family is preparing for itself not happiness but sorrow. But where, on the contrary, there are vigorous and venturesome activity, mutual charity, and a lively patience,

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internal happiness flourishes just because it is neglected. Social welfare on the large scale is subject to the same conditions. The natural vitality of our race, if only it be unhindered and unsophisticated, together with realised charity, will regenerate the life of our people. But every measure directed immediately to the welfare of the population is designed under the ideals of senility; and although such measures appear to be now inevitable, every one of them is a step in the wrong direction. Moreover, social welfare cannot be a true end of endeavour because human society is itself not an end, but is a means to the fulfilment of personal life; and in proportion as this, its immediate purpose, is forgotten, so that the interests of personal life are subordinated to the collective needs of the community or to the will of the majority, in that same proportion must liberty pass away from our land, and with liberty, all hope of social renewal.

But we can hardly see this matter in its proper light unless we take into account the ultimate end of human society. Our whole method has been that of trying to discover



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a certain realness in life, which should in some degree reflect, as it were, the profoundest attainable truths of our condition ; anticipating, with growing certitude, that the method would yield, not sentiments, nor ideals, nor conjectures, nor expedients, but solid and commonplace facts of incomparable importance in any attempt to understand the social problem. A method of that kind cannot be followed for a certain distance and then be arbitrarily abandoned. This social problem, then, cannot be understood except we go down to the primary realities and perceive that the ultimate end of human society is the Divine praise. By this we mean that the active supreme perfections, such as wisdom, justice, charity and the like, are in this common life of ours mirrored with a radiance and fulness which they do not achieve, for instance, in the physical universe ; and that all our relations, laws, traditions, knowledge, arts and practical industries, are, like Nature itself, so many ways of seeing through, as it were, toward the beauty and goodness of the Unseen. Inasmuch, then, as the health of

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every creature consists in the perfection with which it fulfils the end of its being, we may expect the renewal and youthfulness of a people in proportion as they honour the Divine Majesty with due adoration; and further, in proportion as they escape into the delightful liberty of a rightness and realness of life which should reflect, as it were, the Divine praises. Thus, if they obey the law it will be in honour of the source of law; if they give, it will be to celebrate the fact that they have nothing of their own, and that we are all children in one family; if they afford security to the weak it will be as a mode or reflection of the infinite security which upholds us all; if they labour it will be in praise of the creation; if they seek a low place it will be in acknowledgment of the profoundest truth of their condition, and it will also be to acknowledge in every act the infinity of objective perfections, which will then be their inalienable inheritance. It is all play, wherein act and affection and understanding are one. It is the child-mind, which cannot grow old and has put away melancholy.

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In the *Shepherd* of Hermas there is a vision of an old woman, infirm and seated on a chair, who in successive visions becomes younger, until at last she is youthful, radiant and joyous. "In the first vision," explains the interpreter, "she appeared in the shape of an old woman sitting in a chair, because your old spirit was decayed and without strength by reason of your infirmities and the doubtfulness of your heart. For as they who are old have no hope of renewing themselves, nor expect anything but their departure; so you, being weakened through your worldly affairs, gave yourself up to sloth, and cast not away your solicitude; and your sense was confused, and you grew old in your sadness." But after the last vision, when her form had been perfectly regenerated: "In the third vision you saw her yet younger, fair and cheerful, and of a serene countenance. For as, if some good news comes to one who is sad, he straightway forgets his sadness, and regards nothing else but the good news he has heard, and for the rest he is comforted, and his spirit is renewed through the joy which he has

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received, even so you have been refreshed in your spirit." It is thus that the Divine praises take away sloth, care and infirmity, and renew the youth of a people. This is the solution of the social question.

It may be objected that this, however, is hardly a practicable solution; and our last attempt must be to show the grounds of our conviction that it is not only practicable but that it will come about. We believe that children now living will see the renewal of our civilisation; that youth will come again in place of senility, "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." This belief is founded on the fact that the contrary movement has proceeded to a point at which it has become intolerable to human nature. Of this the enormous flood of discontent, with which we set out, is only one of several kinds of evidence. In every respect—physical, nervous, economic, intellectual, moral, spiritual—humanity cannot any longer stand the strain and the oppression, the emptiness and dreariness and cruelty, of a virtually atheistic civilisation and social system. That is one fact; the other is as

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follows. The powers of regeneration, the sources of youth and vitality, which have renewed society in the past, are eternally the same, and cannot fail.

Yet if any reader has come so far, perhaps on the whole with sympathy, he may still find certain difficulties in arriving at the same conclusion. Among these difficulties there are probably two which greatly outweigh the rest, and they shall be dealt with here. First, there is a vast amount of devotion, of good-will, and of religious activity throughout our land, yet they do not seem to be effecting the social renewal of which we have spoken, nor to be likely to do so. Secondly, so far from coming to believe and to rest in the unseen, our people are becoming more harshly limited by the tangible; so far from a dawning sense of dependence and nothingness, they are becoming more self-assertive, and more hungry for success and for pleasure. The appeal of the ancient religion falls more and more on deaf or incredulous ears. How, then, is there reason to believe that there will be such a renewal?

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To the first of these objections we reply that this undoubted wealth of devotion and of good-will and of religious activity, great as its services are, is for the most part frustrated from its normal social effect by sophistications, which exist in order to prevent the realised and enacted love of the Eternal and of man. A huge disabling tissue of conventions and false ideas infiltrates and enfolds it like a fungoid growth. It glows, for example, with the sentiments of unity, yet does the works and maintains the institutions of dissension. It glows with the sentiments of fraternal charity, yet too often does the works and maintains the institutions of exploitation and cpression. It is a true devotion ; yet, through sophistication, it has become ancillary to the standards of the world. The claims of comfort and respectability, of money-getting and success, of social caste, of intellectual nicety, physical daintiness and moral sentimentality, are suffered to impose themselves on personal and family life, in such a way as to prevent the renovation of all things by charity. The modes of human relationship,

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and all the means of existence, instead of being made, as far as may be, transparent to primary realities, are allowed to become as opaque as they will. All this wealth of devotion, however sincere and salutary, is for the most part incapacitated for the work of renewal, because it is not social in character, but is predominantly individualistic ; inasmuch as it has for its chief note not the Divine praises and the consequent abandonment and worthlessness of the self ; but rather, on the whole, the consolation, and the adornment, and the virtues, and the establishment of the self.

As for the second objection, it is probably true that to a majority of our population, and perhaps an increasing majority, the appeal of the Christian religion is a tissue of meaningless formulæ, an outrage alike on truth and on true values. It represents to them not youth, blitheness, carelessness of the morrow, inviolable friendship and security, ardent labour, a happy company, a great family, a beauty not of this world ; but rather dotage, anxiety, precision, pietism ; dissensions about trifling unrealities ; a

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conspiracy of fictitious beliefs and assurances, factitious experiences and exaggerated expressions ; all perfectly compatible with a very resolute service of mammon. Now, however false this impression may be, it is certainly the impression which exists in the mind of the average artisan. Its force is due to the fact that there is indeed a failure to liberate and to realise charity throughout the whole texture of life ; there is a failure to renew the youth of society. The appeal is therefore deficient in the single respect in which our people are, in general, able and willing to judge of it.

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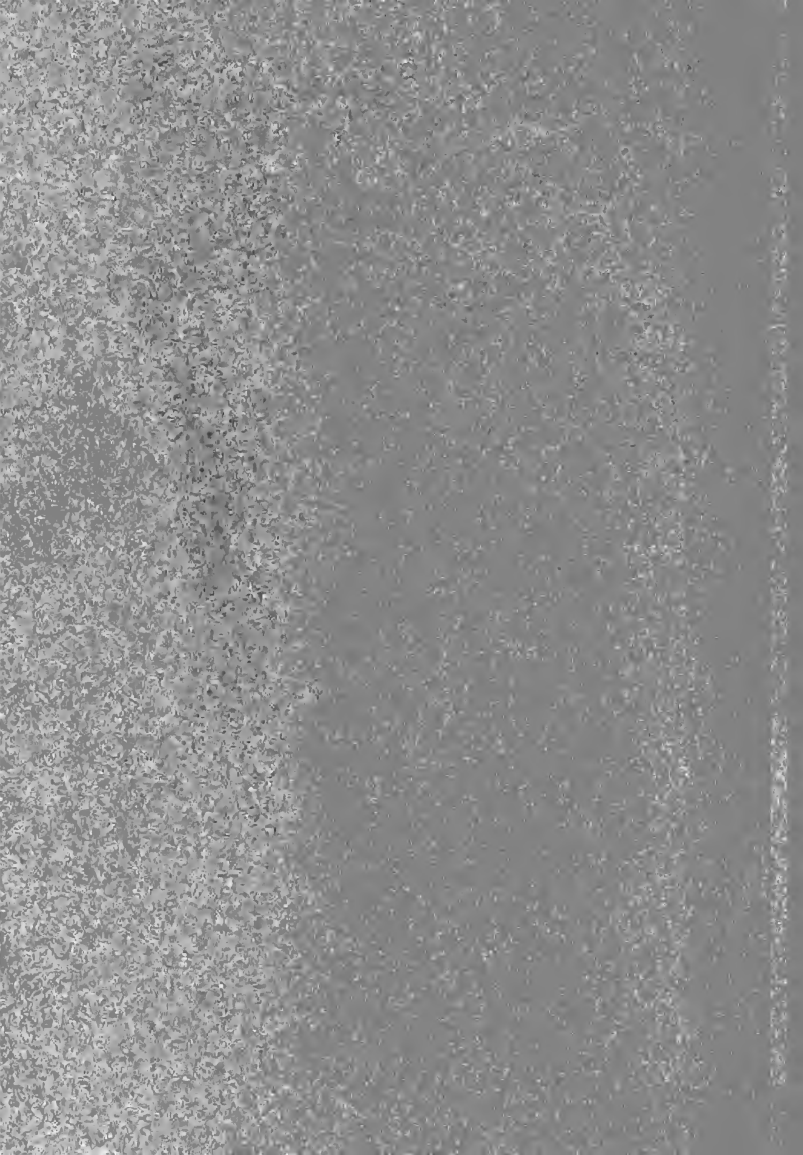


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